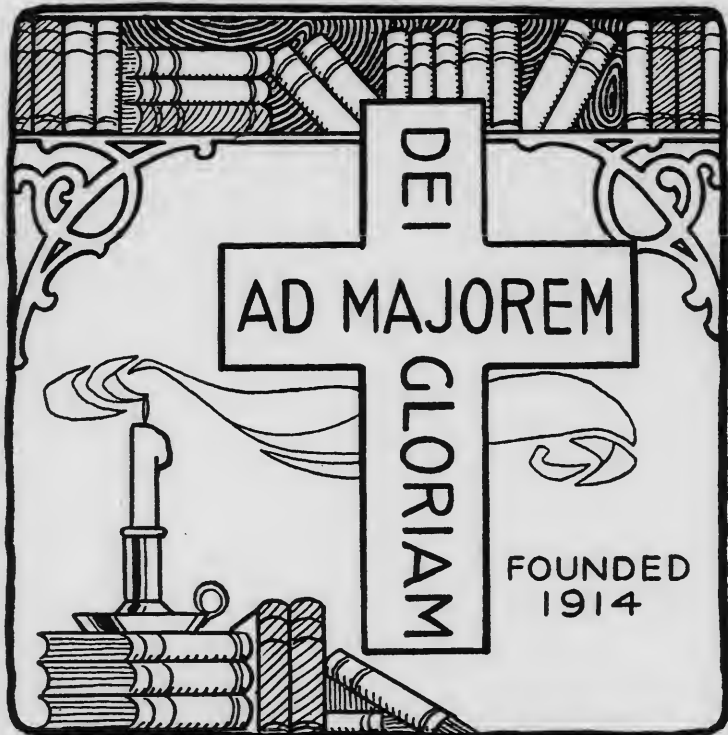


SLATER'S
CHRONICLES.

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CHRONICLES

LIVES AND RELIGION
IN CHESHIRE

AND ELSEWHERE.

BY
GEORGE SLATER.

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INTRODUCTION.



THE chief object that I have in view in writing this little book is, that I may leave behind me a brief history of men that have lived, and of things that have happened in my native county, in my own day.

In this book my readers will find repeated references to the writings and sayings of other men. They will also find that I am citing the evidence of many faithful witnesses in my support, and yet they will find that I deal chiefly with things that I have seen with my own eyes, heard with my own ears, or have known of my own knowledge ; and in doing this, I will venture to hope that this short record of the events and experiences of my own times may be of some service, and may do some good, not only to those who are gliding along the same stage of life

with myself, but more especially to the unborn generations that will come after me, and whose eyes may happen to fall on these pages long after I have joined the great majority, and have emigrated to those unknown shores on the other side the river.

I have long since reached my three-score years and ten, and during all my days have been in active service in many departments of my station in life. There are very few local men who have had a longer and more varied acquaintance with men and things, rich and poor, good and bad, wheat and tares.

My little book will not record a hundredth part of what I have seen, heard, and known. I am not aware that any other pen is ever likely to be employed in similar work, and yet I know that I shall record only a very few of the memorable events of my day, and shall leave abundant materials for my successor in this line. Great men and great events will be above and beyond my purpose. They will be recorded elsewhere.

I have known hundreds and thousands of little and obscure men and women in Cheshire, who, in my opinion, have had a noble purpose in life, and

who deserve honourable mention. It shall be my business to preserve a few of their names alive, in the hope that their noble example may be blessed to those that come after us.

It will not be my business nor my purpose to write a general history of our country, nor of the great events that have from century to century happened in the life of our nation.

It will, however, be necessary for me to take a very brief glance at a few of the notable landmarks in our country's history. It will be expedient to do this in order to connect the great past with the present, and in order to show how we stand related to our remote ancestors, who lived their day and served their generation ages and ages since, and were no doubt as arduous in the great battle of life as are any of their posterity.

Not one in a thousand of the heroic deeds of ancient times is brought down to us :

“ One Cæsar lives, a thousand are forgot.”

If we except the knowledge that we have gained from the sacred writings, we are almost entirely in the dark as to what was going on in the world three

thousand years since, and this is especially the case as relates to our own country. The fact is that we have no authentic written history of the earliest Britons.

It is highly probable that there was a considerable population in Britain more than a thousand years before the Christian era. It was in those days that our ancestors were reclaiming the country, making our roads, fencing our fields, and laying the foundations of a country that was destined to become a great empire.

Historians tell us, that about the beginning of the Christian era, the country was invaded by the Romans, who left the print of their feet behind them, which is visible in many parts of the island to this day.

After these days came the Angles and the Saxons, who are said to have come from some undefinable places on the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea. They were different races and yet emanating from the same source. These people were in the habit for ages and ages of making repeated descents upon our island, and forming settlements in the

south and east coasts. It is to them that we are indebted for the term "Anglo-Saxon."

After these things, the Danes in the ninth and tenth centuries were making repeated descents upon our shores, chiefly at first for the purpose of plunder and mischief.

Denmark is a small country, and it would seem that a thousand years since they wanted more room for their increasing population.

England was thinly inhabited, and at that time was divided into a number of petty sovereignties, and was consequently weak in means of defence, and the Danes found no difficulty in forming settlements upon our coasts.

One expedition followed another, until they became so numerous and so extended, that the new comers began to assume the offensive.

Claims were set up and disputed; advances were made and repulsed. Many were the fights and feuds, and many were the battles that were won and lost, and yet gradually the Danes seem to have persisted in effecting settlements on various parts of our eastern coast.

It is not too much to say that if the brave ancient Britons had only been properly united and organised under one powerful military chief, they would soon have made short work of the intruders, as a warning to all others in like manner offending against the peace of their ancient sovereignty.

Suffice it to say, that in the first quarter of the eleventh century, the Danes had become so numerous, and had possessed themselves of such vast districts of country, and were moreover so completely mingled and consolidated with the inhabitants, that there was an end of further strife; the people became reconciled to Danish rule, a Danish king was called to the throne, and was perhaps, the first monarch who really had sovereign rights extending over all England.

The name of this sovereign was Canute, and he was not only king of England, but he was also king of Denmark and Norway. Historians speak of him as a brave and powerful prince, and such was the superstition of these times that the obsequious people were foolish enough to reckon him omnipotent. He, in order to rebuke their folly, seated himself in

his chair before the rising tide on the sea-shore, and commanded the waves not to approach his feet. The sea, however, refused to obey him. He then turned with an angry frown to his panic-stricken courtiers, and told them that Almighty power belonged to God only: He alone can say to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou go and no further." These were wise words when we consider the idolatrous and benighted age in which they were spoken.

These things took place in the first half of the eleventh century, and before the days of William the Conqueror.

I have purposely omitted to write of the numerous battles that were fought, and of the fights and struggles which took place between the ancient Britons and their invaders, from the sixth to the tenth centuries. If any of my readers wish to be more fully informed, I must refer them to our historians.

A very few words about my own ancestors must suffice. It is supposed that they came over from Denmark in one of the expeditions of those times, and that they served in the army of King Canute,

or his father, about nine hundred years since. This statement rests upon tradition, but it receives some confirmation from the fact that a martial escutcheon was decreed about that time, or soon after. I have now in my possession a steel copy and block of the same which were obtained many years since from the Heraldry Office, in London, bearing the ancient family motto in Latin :

“ Crescit sub pondere virtus.”

These words being freely translated, mean : “ The greater the difficulty the greater the bravery ; ” another translation is : “ The heavier the burden the greater the courage.” I wish we honestly deserved such a motto.

It happened that in the year 1884 I was travelling in Denmark and Sweden, and spent nearly a week in Copenhagen, on this my first visit to that country. I saw at once the family likeness in almost every face in the streets, and was more than ever satisfied that I was then travelling among my own relatives.

I never could hear of any written record of these things ; they have been merely handed down by the living voice from sire to son for many generations,

and when I was a boy, my father related the same things to me. I accept the traditionary evidence, which is confirmed in some degree from other sources, and yet I admit that it is a matter of no consequence, inasmuch as our great Maker has made of one flesh and blood all nations of men, and we all alike have an ancient lineage, whether we are able to trace it or not.

The name in the olden time seems to partake of the German, and was originally written "Schlater." I find that whenever I am travelling in France or Germany, or other continental countries, the name is always pronounced as if it were written Schlahter. I know how unimportant and trifling all this is, and how little my readers will care about it, and yet it is often very amusing and interesting to see how the names of men and places have changed since ancient times, and how very few families and very few places retain the identical name they had a thousand years since.

As far as I have been able to learn, my lineal ancestors and their connections were mostly engaged in agricultural pursuits. Some of them were large

farmers about the Fens of Lincolnshire, and on the long reaches of border land between Yorkshire and Derbyshire. The family escutcheon before named, seems to have been granted many centuries since, at Chesterfield, in Derbyshire.

Very few of the family (so far as I know) have ever distinguished themselves or ever made themselves a great name, and yet during the ages, we have had a few who deserve honourable recognition, and have done fairly well in their day to serve their generation.

We have had amongst us, lineally and collaterally, the soldier and the sailor, the lawyer and the barrister, the author and the preacher (both Clergy and Nonconformist,) the schoolmaster and the scholar, the linguist and the scientist, the mathematician and the classic, the poet and the painter.

It is certified that my lineal ancestor belonged to the last designation, and that he was not only a painter, but that he was a very eminent Danish artist, and that he and his staff were employed for a long time in very exquisite fresco work at Gawsorth church. Previous to this time Gaws-

worth was within the large parish of Prestbury, and a chapel-of-ease had done duty as a church since the twelfth century.

It is said that when Gawsworth was first constituted a separate parish, the old chapel-of-ease was superseded by a new or a renovated church. These things took place over three hundred years since, and for the long space of nearly three centuries, the mural paintings in the interior of Gawsworth church have been the wonder and admiration of the artists of several generations, and have ever been the pride of all my family connections, knowing as we did, that this unsurpassable work had been designed and executed by my lineal ancestor. This evidence of ancient skill was in a perfect state of preservation down to my own day, but unfortunately it has been destroyed by the ruthless hands of the church restorers of the nineteenth century.

The Danish artist (if I may now call him such) is supposed to have been a native of the country lying between Chesterfield and Sheffield. He crossed the mountain range which is known as the backbone

of England, found his way into Cheshire, and for a year or two at least, was engaged with his staff of workmen in the skilled work above named.

He was a bachelor at the time, and during his stay he made the acquaintance of a farmer in the parish, and eventually married the daughter, took a farm, and again devoted himself to agriculture, as many of his family connections had continued to do ever since the days of King Canute. He became the father of several sons, and thereby laid the foundations of a family, which since his day have been fructuous enough to spread themselves into various branches from the parent stock.

Our Cheshire historians tell us that Gawsworth is one of the most beautiful places in the county.

In the middle of the village there is a succession of four or five ornamental pools of water of about two acres each, separated from each other by a dam, giving a carriage road between each. One of the pools lies between the rectory on one side, and the church on the other. The situation is charming, and always reminds me of the words of a local poet,

“ Delightful place thy builders chose.”

Gawsworth is my native place. I was born there. My forefathers had lived on the same farm for some generations. We all hail from that one place, which is the source of all my family connections. Gawsworth has for many generations been separated from the old parish of Prestbury, to which it formerly belonged.

It was in the year 1823 that my father and mother, with their young family (seven of us), left the "old house at home" in Gawsworth, and removed to Dunkirk, near Holmes Chapel, and this place became our home for many years, until we grew up, and one after another made homes for ourselves elsewhere. At the time that I am writing there are only three of us still living, and the time for the survivors is short.

The reader will find that the different churches in Cheshire will be referred to in these pages, and in some instances there may appear an excess of candour, and yet it will be found that I do not write in the spirit of controversy, neither do I attempt to create difficulties, nor to widen any breach that may already exist. One of the chief objects of my life

has been to promote goodwill among all the different sections of Christian people; and, so far as I am able, to draw them nearer and nearer together in the spirit of Christian harmony.

My prophetic anticipations as to the future of the churches and the world will be received with doubt by some of my readers. I give my views fully and frankly, and lay myself open to criticism should any reader think it worth his while.

I now commend to my numerous friends this my final work, which I designate "CHRONICLES OF LIVES AND RELIGION IN CHESHIRE."

GEORGE SLATER.

WOODFORD HALL,
OVER, NEAR WINSFORD,
July, 1891.

CHRONICLES

OF

LIVES AND RELIGION IN CHESHIRE

AND ELSEWHERE.

CHAPTER I.



AT the beginning of this present century my father married and succeeded to the old house at home, where his forefathers had lived before him. The old farm house was built chiefly of timber, and thatched with straw. A few years after this he built a new farm house more convenient to the highway. I have often heard him say that he was present at the great Camp Meeting of the Primitive Methodists, which was held upon the Mow Mountain, on May 31st in the year 1807, and I have heard him say that he was an eye-witness of the conference which took place between the celebrated Hugh Bourne and a Mr. Stephenson—a magistrate—and his friends, who came upon the ground and blustered and threatened to disperse the meeting.

Hugh Bourne scarcely condescended to argue the matter with his opponent, but clasped his hands and

began very devoutly to pray for him, saying, "Lord, save this man." Mr. Stephenson interposed, and pretended great authority, but he only received the same answer, "Lord, save this man; Lord, have mercy on this man." The boaster became a coward, and he rode away murmuring "I can do nothing with Bourne, he will persist in praying for me." This was certainly very characteristic of Hugh Bourne.

About this time Hugh Bourne, James Bourne, William Clowes, and other leading men of the Primitive Methodists formed a lifelong acquaintance with my father. First one and then another of them were frequently at my father's house. They were kindred spirits, and were full of Christian zeal and life. All this began before I was born, and continued during my early boyhood. After this my father converted the old farm house into a Meeting House for the use of the Primitive Methodists, which they used for some years.

In or about the year 1820 my father lent one of his fields in Gawsorth to the Primitive Methodists for a camp meeting. The multitude of people attending was very great; they were estimated at five thousand at least. The field being near to the house, and the day very warm, the people were continually coming to the house in great number for something to drink. There was no one in the house

except a servant-maid; she gave them milk, whey, and buttermilk, until the store was exhausted.

In these days we had no temperance societies. It was very common for people to brew and keep beer in the house and to drink it. The servant-maid began to supply the thirsty people with beer, and some of them gave the girl a penny or two. It happened that there was among them a real son of Belial, who came in among the rest and got a cup of beer, and gave the girl twopence.

This vile fellow went the next morning and gave information to the Excise that my father was selling beer. A summons was issued, and to the surprise of everybody my father had to appear before the magistrates to answer the charge of selling beer without a license. In those days the penalty was very severe, probably a hundred pounds or more. The fellow took his oath that he had bought a glass of beer and paid twopence for it, and that he had seen other people do the same. This evidence was very strong, and no sufficient answer for the moment was forthcoming; the magistrates, however, adjourned the case for a week.

It was a week of sad suspense, for a conviction would be not only ruinous, but scandalous. And now occurred a circumstance which appeared to be wonderfully providential. On the very night before the second trial came on, my mother, who during the

week had been full of trouble, had a dream, and in her dream she saw a man—to use her own words—with a snuff-coloured coat, come forward before the magistrates and give evidence which saved them. She told her dream the next morning, and away they all went to the magistrates' meeting.

When they came into the town, there stood in front of the Court-house a man with a snuff-coloured coat. He was an entire stranger, but when my mother saw him she said "That is the very man, that I saw in my dream." He made himself known to them, told them that he had heard of the case, and that he had come to speak for them.

This man gave evidence before the magistrates to the effect that he attended the Camp Meeting, and was at the house at the time named, the maid-servant gave him a glass of beer, she asked him for nothing and he paid nothing. He saw her serve many other persons, but in no case did he see anyone pay anything, nor did she ask for anything. This evidence settled the matter, the magistrates dismissed the case. My mother's dream was fulfilled in so remarkable a manner, that as long as she lived she always saw in it the clearest proof of the finger of God, in answer to her "strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save."

The vile scoundrel who sold himself to this wickedness, was not only severely reprimanded, but he also

suffered popular vengeance, and in due time he got his reward. "Behold the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, verily they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, root and branch."

When I was a child, my mother hired a girl named Elizabeth Adderley, as servant. She was then in her early teens, and was the daughter of a widow in the neighbourhood. I can remember that she carried me to see and to gather and to smell the primroses, which abounded in my father's fields at that time. There were many other beautiful flowers, but none of them were so fragrant and ambrosial to my little olfactory nerve as the primrose, and from that day to this the little primrose has been my favourite flower. It knows nothing of party feuds and political strife, and yet I have lived to see this dear and innocent flower cruelly and wantonly pressed into political service, and ruthlessly compelled to do duty as a Tory badge. I object to this monopoly, on the ground that my little favourite has never learned politics, and is neither Whig, Tory, nor Radical.

When I was a child I came down stairs one morning all alone in my nightdress, and managed to set myself on fire. In my fright I ran out to hide myself in a little back garden. It happened that my father was at the building across the farm yard, he just caught a glimpse of me all in a blaze as I turned the corner into the garden. He ran for his life and was just in time,

no living child had ever a narrower escape, my life was saved, but I bear the mark of that morning to this day.

A few years after this, when I was about nine years old, I was with other lads like myself on very thin ice on one of Gawsworth pools. I slipped and fell, and the ice smashed under me; I happened, however, to roll myself over from the broken place and escaped with the skin of my teeth. How little do we know of the dangers, seen and unseen, that we all pass through!

Upon our farm in Gawsworth we had a source of profit of which many farmers never heard; we had a great number of very large birch trees, many of them measuring from six to ten feet in circumference. It was our practice in the spring-time to bore holes through the bark with a large gimlet, a foot or two above the ground, and to insert a small wooden tube in each hole, by which means the sap was carried into a vessel which was set to catch it. The yield was remarkable. By this means we secured about a one-horse cartload of sap, called birch water, every day during the season. It was an article which was easily sold in Macclesfield, and was manufactured into birch wine, which was reckoned a great luxury in those days.

Since then I have seen that the patriarchal old birch trees, which had stood for centuries, had fallen

before the ruthless axe of the nineteenth century; and as far as I can hear, this article, which may be reckoned as the fruit of the ground, has slipped out of the sight of the Cheshire farmer, and many of them have never even heard of such a thing as a tenant raising his rent from the sap of the old birch trees.

From the days of my early boyhood, I was, like all my brothers, brought up to regular work; my father never would allow us to spend our time in idleness; nor would he ever allow us to attend any place of vain amusements.

In those days bear-baiting was practised at a public-house in Gawsorth, and nearly all the lads in the parish were permitted to see the sights and enjoy the sports. I could even hear the shouts and the voices of merriment to our own house. We, like naughty lads in general, wished to go, but the paternal law was strong—"Thou shalt not." In my little, naughty, wicked heart I was almost ready to curse my own father. How little did I then think that his strict law was for my own good, and that even then I was not too young to learn that "Folly is the feast of fools," and from that day to this the "Fools' Feast" has had no charms for me.

In those days farming was worse, if possible, than it has been in recent years. Prices of all sorts of produce were generally very low, and farmers had hard work to make all ends meet. I have read in

history, that in the days of Pliny, who himself was a large landlord in Tuscany, and had a long list of tenants, some of whom were leaving their farms, others were demanding a reduction of rents owing to the very low prices of their produce, alleging that it was impossible to pay the exorbitant rents. I was travelling in Tuscany a few years since, and was reminded of the experience of landlord and tenant in that country eighteen hundred years since. The same thing has been going on in a greater or less degree, except at intervals, from that day to this, and I suppose that the problem will remain unsolved down to the end of time.

We had also upon the border of our farm a moss room, where we regularly got every summer a large lot of peat, called "turf," which we sold in Macclesfield at seven shillings for a one-horse load. This was a source of profit, and not only so, but it helped to save us from idleness, which is the curse and ruin of thousands in these later days.

One of the first things that I remember was being carried to school on the back of my nurse before-named, and being taught the vowels of the alphabet. I went to this school for two or three years at least. At this time the school was on the premises adjacent to the Vicarage in Gawsworth. The Vicar himself was the schoolmaster. His name was Crabtree; he had short legs and a short body, and was very

corpulent. I do not doubt that his circumference was far greater than his length. He had a good school, and was reckoned a jovial fellow, and was pretty well liked in the parish. He was frequently invited to the farm houses on their special occasions, such as what they called "Shutting of Shearing," or Harvest Home. Notwithstanding his great corpulence, he prided himself in knowing how to step it. It was rare fun for the swains, when all hearts were merry, to see their parson with his big stomach and short legs, and without coat or waistcoat, leading off in an Irish jig, or dancing a hornpipe with the servant-maids.

I do not suppose that the old gentleman even professed to be religious, but as far as I know he was frank and open, and was honest enough to show himself in his true colour; and an honest man, we are told, is the noblest work of God. He left the parish, but whether he was advanced to a better living or not, I cannot say. Other changes followed; the school was removed to the sexton's house at the foot of the churchyard steps, and old Mr. Swindells, the parish clerk, became our schoolmaster. We had also a fresh Vicar, a young man spit span new from college. One of the first lessons that we were required to learn at school was the exact name, at full length, of our new clergyman. His name was "Francis Frederic Grimshaw Brandt." We were

given to understand that it was a very grand name, and that we must learn it off by heart and never forget it. The name was so hammered into my head for years that I still remember it.

Our new clergyman had not only a grand name, but we were taught to regard him as a very grand man. He gave strict orders that all the boys on meeting him on the road must pay him the homage due to his position. Little did I think in those days that I should live to know his son as a barrister, learned in the law. The prescribed form of salutation was, that the boy must take off his hat or cap with his left hand, and with his right hand wide open, must stroke down his bare head from his crown to his nose; and if any luckless lad broke this law, he was forthwith brought before a sort of court-martial, to take his trial and receive his doom.

I remember Mr. Brandt coming into school one day and ordering the old schoolmaster to strip a boy for this offence down to the waist, and to cane his bare back without mercy; Mr. Brandt standing by and urging the old schoolmaster to lay on and lay on. We all trembled in our shoes, and I, for one, never forgot it. It was a very unmistakable method of teaching us all how "to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters." If such a thing were done in these days the offender might perhaps have

a golden opportunity of explaining the nature of his dignity to a jury of his countrymen.

I remember several freaks of this young clergyman, but I will name only one. There is an ornamental sheet of water called by the boys "Parson's Pool;" it is perhaps an acre in extent. The water is deep, and it lies between the Church and the Vicarage.

It was winter, the pool was frozen over, but the strength of the ice was uncertain, and our new Vicar wished to test it. He called the biggest boy on the bank to go upon the ice; the boy hesitated, but he was urged to go further and further, and then he ordered the boy to jump and jump; the boy was in mortal fear, but he durst not disobey, and at length he jumped again and again till Mr. Brandt was satisfied of its strength. He then went into the Vicarage, and forthwith came back, and putting on his skates he disported himself all afternoon. If the boy had dropped through the ice and been drowned he might probably have been honoured with a funeral sermon on the following Sunday, and we should, perhaps, have been told that the lad lost his life in the discharge of his duty.

When these things took place Mr. Brandt was an inexperienced young man. He lived to get more sense, and he profited by domestic trouble. One of his sons became a barrister, as above noted. I

knew him well, he was a nice fellow. I was with him some years since at Bradwall Hall, in company with his friend Mr. Latham; we had a long talk on politics and other matters. This was the last time I saw him. He was then in his prime, but since then he has paid his mortal debt, and more recently his friend, Mr. Latham, M.P. for Crewe, has done the same. The most unlikely of the trio has hitherto survived.

It was in or about the year 1789, that my father's elder brother, Cyrus, took the Henshall Hall Farm in Siddington, near to Gawsworth. He joined the Methodist Society, and became a true Christian soon after this. A man named Fisher, who lived in Gawsworth, was converted about the same time, and opened his house for preaching.

It was in or about the year 1834, that I went with my father to Henshall Hall, to see my uncle Cyrus. He was then about seventy years of age, and was a disciple of the old school, and no mistake. He told me that for forty years he had never once missed going to Fisher's to his class on a Sunday morning. In all my experience I never met with such a case of regularity as this. It almost surpasses belief. He died as a Christian, in July, 1838, aged seventy-five years, and was buried at Gawsworth. He had lived on the same farm about forty-nine years, and had brought up ten children, all of whom did fairly well

in the world, and for the most part lived as Christians ought to do.

His eldest son, John, was present with us on this occasion, in 1834. He had then recently been converted, and was very warm and zealous. He lived at Siddington Hall for about forty-five years, and very watchfully and wisely walked in the steps of his father until he reached about fourscore years. He died as a Christian several years since.

The second son, named Cyrus after his father, lived at Welltrough Hall in Siddington. He was a sort of standing institution at Withington Chapel for many years, and died lately at an advanced age.

The third, and youngest of the three sons, was Samuel, who lived at Gawsworth Hall. His life was shortened by an accident many years since. His son John now lives at Tidnock, in the same parish. The only surviving daughter (as far as I know) of my old uncle Cyrus Slater is my own cousin, Mrs. Rachel Lea, of Dock Bank, near Middlewich. She was born at Henshall Hall, and has been a widow since the year 1858, and well and wisely has she ever walked in the steps of her father, and verily "her children rise up and call her blessed." I know that her name is dear to many. Long may she yet live!

To this day there has never been a Methodist Chapel in Gawsworth, and it is somewhat remarkable that the Preaching House has, for nearly a

hundred years, always been "Fisher's of Gaws-
worth," not of course the same man, nor indeed the
same family, and yet it has always been "Fisher's."
And only two years since I met on the road old
James Fisher, of the Lane End Farm, and learned
from his own lips that the Ark of the Covenant is
now resting at his house, so that we have still the old
name "Fisher's of Gawsworth."



CHAPTER II.



THE parish of Prestbury (originally Priest-burg, or Priest-town) is very extensive. It includes about thirty outlying townships; it also to this day includes the large town of Macclesfield.

It is not my purpose to write a history of Macclesfield, and yet I must devote a few pages of my little book to this subject, which is always interesting to me, as it is to every other native.

Macclesfield became a borough town in the reign of Henry the Third, which is now over eight hundred years since. The old church, called St. Michael's, was founded in the same century, and the town at that time was fortified, or at least was surrounded by a wall; hence we have the names of Common Gate, Jordan Gate, and Chester Gate. Some say that the old name of the town was St. Michael's Field, from which the old church took its name. The town, however, for centuries went by the name of Maxfield, and only during the last century began to be called Macclesfield.

The borough can boast its ancient escutcheon, to wit, a lion rampant and a sheaf of corn, with the motto, "*Nec virtus nec copia desunt*," which words indicate that neither bravery nor supplies were

wanting. There are many old records still extant which denote a wonderfully rude state of things in former times. And to show the change that has taken place in the value of money since Cromwell's time, I may observe that General Fairfax, when he visited the town, was officially received by the mayor and corporation, and the cost of the grand reception and all its belongings amounted to the enormous sum of fifteen pence. A grand reception of this nature in these days would most likely cost hundreds of pounds.

It is recorded that in Macclesfield in the early part of the last century men earned in wages one shilling per day, and women sixpence. Butter was fourpence per pound, cheese twopence, and the best beef twopence, and new milk one penny a quart. Many changes have taken place since then. Methodism was then unknown to the world, and the name of its founder had not then been announced. It is said that on Friday, November 8th, 1745, Mr. Wesley paid his first visit, and he is supposed to have preached at Shrigley Fold, near "Maxfield." This place was destined to be very notable in the early days of Methodism. It was, in fact, the birthplace of the infant cause, and religious services had been held there for several years before Mr. Wesley's visit.

One of the early Methodists of those days was one George Pearson. He was a young working tailor,

with a wife and small family, living at Waters Green, a place well known in the middle of the town. He could neither read nor write. It happened, however, that he found his way to Shrigley Fold, where a few praying people were in the habit of meeting to worship God; this was in the year 1747. It was not long before it became evident that he was one of those whose heart God had touched. He heard that Mr. Wesley would be in Manchester in the month of May, and George went to see and hear him. The only place of worship of which the Methodists could then boast in Manchester was a small obscure garret near the river.

George Pearson not only heard Mr. Wesley, but he also introduced himself to the great man, and entreated him to visit Macclesfield, and told him there was a nice place called Waters Green where he might preach to the poor benighted people of Macclesfield. Mr. Wesley assented, and on the very next Sabbath, May 10th, 1747, Mr. Wesley preached at Astbury early in the morning, and then he preached at Congleton; he then proceeded to Macclesfield, eight miles, and preached to a great crowd on Waters Green. His visit was very short. He merely proclaimed his divine mission to the sinners of the town, and exhorted them all to flee from the wrath to come. He then left them and proceeded to Woodley, where he had to preach the same

evening. On this day, not only did Mr. Wesley preach four times, but he travelled at least twenty miles.

Mr. Wesley did not again visit the town for twelve years, and yet the infant cause not only lived, but grew and prospered. A stable near to George Pearson's house was taken and fitted up as a Preaching Room for the early Methodists. As Shrigley Fold was the first, so this was the second cradle of the infant Hercules. The name "circuit" had not then been pronounced. The preachers travelled long journeys and made long tours, which were then called "rounds." It was now that John Nelson visited these parts. He was, indeed, a burning and shining light.

Mr. Nelson's journal, written by himself, has been made a blessing to thousands. He records meeting with John Bennett, who then was appointed to labour in the Cheshire round; it was commonly called "Bennett's Round," and embraced not only Cheshire but also a large part of Lancashire. About this time a Mrs. Clulow, the wife of Mr. John Clulow, gave herself fully to God and His cause. She sought and found pardoning mercy and became an Israelite indeed. She added great strength to the cause, and they now began to think of some better place of worship than the old stable. George Pearson, the tailor, and Mrs. Clulow were appointed a committee to procure a better place if possible, and eventually

they took the ground floor of a cottage, and when they had fitted it up Mrs. Clulow said, "George, we shall never be able to fill this place, it will hold forty folk." George replied, "Oh! hold up your heart, I'll warrant you." Verily this was the day of small things.

In the year 1754 we read of the Manchester Circuit, which was then made to embrace Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire, a huge parish certainly for a Methodist preacher. Macclesfield was not included in the Manchester Circuit. Mr. John Bennett, aforementioned, worked long and well as an early Methodist preacher, but he embraced Calvinistic views and became pastor of an Independent Church at Warburton in Cheshire. He died as a Christian a few years after this. Mr. Wesley visited Macclesfield in May, 1759, and again in March, 1761, and again on Friday, August 6th, 1762, on this visit Mr. Wesley remarks that he found forty persons who professed to be cleansed "from all sin." On Monday, June 20th, 1763, Mr. Wesley again preached in Macclesfield, on July 19th, 1764, and on August 25th, 1765, April 27th, 1766, and indeed Mr. Wesley now paid annual visits to Macclesfield.

In 1770 Macclesfield was made the head of a circuit, and so continues to this day. The first superintendent was Robert Costerdine, whose name deserves honourable mention. In the year 1773 we

find the Rev. David Simpson in Macclesfield as junior curate at the old Church. Serious disputes took place between a Mr. Hanson, the senior curate, and his junior. Mr. Charles Roe, a rich man who was the first man to run his private carriage in the town, took Mr. Simpson's part, and built for him a new church, which is known to this day as Christ Church. In 1774 a gentleman was elected to fill the office of mayor of the borough. That gentleman was Mr. John Ryle. He was the first Methodist to fill the office of chief magistrate, and on Easter Sunday, April 3rd, 1774, Mr. Wesley and the two curates walked in the procession with the Methodist mayor to the Parish Church.

About this time a Miss Hester Roe, daughter of an eminent clergyman, became a Methodist. She was niece to Mr. Charles Roe who erected the new church. Methodism had been under a cloud from the beginning, but now the sun began to shine. Sunderland Street Chapel was built in the year 1779. The first trustees of this Chapel were:—

JOHN RYLE, *Gentleman.*

JOHN CLULOW, *Baker.*

SAMUEL ROWBOTHAM, *Silk Throwster.*

GEORGE PEARSON, *Silk Throwster.*

ROBERT JOHNSON, *Silk Throwster.*

JOHN BRADBURN, *Silk Throwster.*

ELIAS LOMAS, *Tanner.*

It seems that George Pearson, one of the above-named trustees, and who was one of the first Methodists in the town, and had been a leading man for more than thirty years, was not able to write his name.

In this year, Monday, March 21st, 1779, Mr. Wesley preached in the open air in Macclesfield. My own father, who was then a little boy in his eighth year, was present with his mother, and saw and heard the great apostle of Methodism, and well remembered seeing the great man stroke back his long white hair, and heard him address the multitude. At this time the Macclesfield circuit contained one thousand two hundred members, and the population of the borough was about seven thousand.

Sunderland Street Chapel was the first Methodist chapel in Macclesfield, and with few exceptions was one of the first in Cheshire, and had the honour of being consecrated to the sacred cause of Methodism by the distinguished Wesley, who occupied the pulpit whenever he subsequently visited the town.

In March, 1781, Mr. Wesley paid his usual visit, and went on to Manchester. Previous to this the Rev. David Simpson, before mentioned, had been presented to the living of Christ Church by his friend and patron, Mr. Charles Roe.

On Good Friday, 1780, Mr. Wesley was in Macclesfield, he preached in Christ Church, morning and

afternoon, and assisted Mr. Simpson in the administration of the Lord's Supper. It is said that about thirteen hundred persons approached the Lord's Table on that memorable day.

The Rev. David Simpson was an extraordinary man. My father knew him well. He was a man of uncommon piety and unrivalled zeal as a Christian minister. He was one in a thousand.

If all the pulpits in our land were only filled with men like David Simpson, the devil's dominion in England would not be worth twelve months' purchase. He was the author of Simpson's "Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings," and other excellent works. He had an immense influence for good in his day, and such was the rising tide of Christian faith and love that it seemed as if all the sin and shame of our land would be swept away.

On Easter Tuesday evening, Mr. Wesley preached in the new chapel in Macclesfield.

It is a somewhat remarkable circumstance that the organ which was in use in Christ Church, and which was played on this occasion, had been a veritable instrument of Handel, and had often been played by the fingers of that great master. Mr. Wesley, who was no stranger to the best of music, was greatly moved by the soft, solemn sound, which affected all to tears. The organist was a Mr. Eneas Maclardie, whose daughter, then an infant of a few months,

became, in twenty-two years after this time, the wife of the Rev. Jabez Bunting, whose name in after years became a household word throughout the great Methodist family. Jabez Bunting was appointed to the Macclesfield Circuit as the junior preacher in 1801, and remained two years. My father, who was then a young man of thirty, regularly heard him preach.

There is an old saying that a wife shines through the medium of her husband. Dr. Bunting in his day was very eminent, and possessed great influence in every department of Methodism. It was no small matter to be the wife of such a man, and Mrs. Bunting was regarded as the queen of Methodist society. It was customary then, as it has been ever since, for the ministers' wives in large towns to meet together now and again in a social fashion. They were all expected to observe religious propriety, especially in public, but they were nevertheless human, and some of them were very human indeed.

Mrs. Bunting was a capital talker, and enjoyed great latitude. Her words sometimes tasted of a little pepper, and yet she now and then got her answer. On one occasion a Mrs. Reynolds came down stairs and walked into the drawing room, "We knew it was Mrs. Reynolds," said Mrs. Bunting, "by the rustling of her dress." "Yes," said Mrs. Reynolds, "and we knew it was Mrs. Bunting by the

rattling of her tongue." This is a very faint specimen of the bright wit that sparkled among these Methodist queens.

It is not possible for me in my little book to find room for even a tithe of the wonderful things that took place about these times in Macclesfield. George Pearson, the poor, unlettered tailor, had become a man of some importance in the town. Mr. John Ryle, who was the first Methodist mayor, was still a man of standing and position. Mr. John Clulow, known as "Lawyer Clulow," was a man of very good standing, and, in fact, Methodism was becoming so respectable in the town, that Mr. Wesley writes: "I went to Macclesfield, and found a people still alive to God, in spite of swiftly increasing riches; if they continue so, it will be the only instance I have known in half-a-century. I warned them in strong terms, and hope that some of them had 'ears to hear.'"

There were hundreds of excellent Christian people, both of men and women, in Macclesfield, about this time. They served their generation nobly and faithfully, and though their names are not recorded on earth, yet they are written in the "Book of Life." On Tuesday, March 30th, 1790, Mr. Wesley entered Macclesfield for the last time. He was now in his eighty-seventh year. His old friends in hundreds crowded to see the venerable man once more. They all seemed to have a presentiment that this would be

his last visit. His memorable life was ebbing out, and his warfare was almost accomplished. His friends provided him with a post-chaise, and on Thursday morning, the first of April, 1790, he took leave of his friends and left Macclesfield, never to see it again.

Immediately after the death of Mr. Wesley, which took place in the year 1791, there was a great religious awakening in Macclesfield and the country round. Not one of our family, as far as I know, had been brought to a knowledge of the truth before this time, but now the revival was like a rising tide, it swept all before it. The careless and the prayerless trembled and began to pray, and among the rest was my father and others of the family. He was then only about twenty-one years of age, yet he soon became a devoted worker and a champion for the truth. When quite a young man he was selected as trustee for one of the early Methodist chapels in Macclesfield, and after the lapse of more than fifty years he was found to be the only surviving trustee.

In the year 1798, when only about twenty-seven years of age, he was a member of the devoted band, and was an earnest co-worker with Mr. John Ryle, who, more than any other man, led the way in the rebuilding of Sunderland Street Chapel. The little old chapel which had served for twenty years was now superseded by the present building.

I have a few more observations to make respecting

Macclesfield. It is stated that Mr. Wesley visited the town about twenty-seven times during his life, and for about fifteen years had paid an annual visit ; but his work was now done, and that tongue which had been made a blessing to thousands was now silent in death, and the great work which had been so well begun and so well sustained for so many years, must now be carried on by others, and well and nobly did some of them, at least, do their duty. The Sunderland Street Chapel was rebuilt in the year 1798, and completed in the following year. Mr. Wesley had now been dead seven years, but his dear and beloved friend, the Rev. David Simpson, still lived. He was now about fifty-four years of age. He was marvellously popular and dearly beloved by all denominations. He was full of the widest sympathy, and had a heart that was overflowing with Christian love and charity.

Strange as it may seem, yet it is no more strange than true, that his superior excellence of life and character did not save him from incessant annoyances from persons of high authority in the Church. He was subjected to a sort of petty persecution, which caused him much sorrow and trouble.

In the year before his death he was engaged in delivering a course of lectures on Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. The place of meeting was an upper room in a factory. The room was crowded, and while Mr.

Simpson was proceeding with his lecture, suddenly a portion of the floor gave way, and a large number of people fell to the floor below, and such was the weight that the second floor gave way also, and the people were plunged to the bottom of the building. The night was dark, and the alarm was dreadful. It is said that about seventy people were very seriously injured, but only one or two lost their lives.

Within a few months after this, the celebrated Dr. Coke visited Macclesfield in pursuance of his great missionary work. He was announced to preach in the Methodist Chapel on June 2nd, 1798. Mr. Simpson went to hear him; several Methodist preachers were in the pulpit with Dr. Coke, and the chapel was densely crowded, and a great multitude crowded for admission. Just when Dr. Coke had announced his text, an alarm arose that the gallery of the chapel was giving way. A panic ensued. The people became frantic. They had a too vivid remembrance of the catastrophe that had occurred only a few months previously. Mr. Simpson sat still in the pew, and did his best to hinder the ladies and all others from joining the excited throng. Some leaped from the gallery into the body of the chapel. One man leaped upon a woman and killed her dead, while he himself was uninjured. Several were killed, and great numbers seriously injured. These sad disasters were very painful to the sympathetic mind of the

Rev. David Simpson. He had experienced much annoyance from his ecclesiastical superiors in the Established Church, and he had long considered whether it was desirable that he should remain a clergyman.

The Methodists generally advised him to stick to his Church, and they did all in their power to support him, but notwithstanding this, he made up his mind to sever himself from the Church of England.

A second edition of his great work, "A Plea for Religion" had just been published. This work is full of strong and earnest remarks relating to the Church and unconverted clergymen, and the reader of this book will see at once that the plain statements which he makes are evidently incompatible with his position as a clergyman. It was well known that his secession was imminent and inevitable, and that it had become impossible for him to remain in the bosom of the Established Church much longer.

He therefore made up his mind to resign his living, and had prepared a farewell sermon and had fixed the day for its delivery, but strange to say that sermon, in the inscrutable providence of God, was never to be delivered. In the summer of 1798 he was suddenly seized with palsy. He, however, partially recovered. Early in the following year his devoted wife was in very feeble health, and no hope was entertained of her recovery, and while she was

lingering and not able to leave her room, her beloved husband, the idol of thousands upon thousands, was attacked by typhus fever; and here they were, husband and wife occupying adjacent rooms, entirely unable to communicate personally with each other. Mrs. Simpson died March 13th, 1799, and her husband survived her only about ten days.

His death took place within twelve hours of the time that he had fixed for preaching his farewell sermon and taking leave of his flock at Christ Church. Some of his last words were "Tell the people that I am not dying as one without hope. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I feel Him precious, for me to live is Christ, and to die will be gain."

He was interred amidst the sighs and groans and tears of an immense multitude. It was reckoned that more than three thousand people had crowded into his church on the occasion, and none felt the loss more than did the Methodists of Macclesfield. They all felt that in the death of Mr. Simpson they had suffered an irreparable loss. The business of the town was almost suspended. Many hearts were broken and tears flowed like water. It was the common talk of the town that he had been cruelly treated by those in authority, and that his valuable life had been sacrificed. This may not be perfectly true, and yet it was well known that there was no longer any *modus vivendi* in the Church; and if

he had lived to preach his farewell sermon, it was his intention to give his reasons, why he could not any longer retain his position in the English Church.

It is hardly possible to conceive of persons being more devoutly beloved than were the Rev. David Simpson and his most excellent and devoted wife; and their deaths, which took place within a few days of each other, cast a sad and impenetrable gloom over the whole town. A few weeks after this they were joined in the better land by Miss Ryle, a young lady of fortune who had been for a long time fondly attached to them in the bonds of Christian love. Their houses had joined each other on Park Green, and the deaths of these three illustrious persons, so good, so devoted, and so useful, were felt by all parties (especially by the Methodists) as an irreparable loss.

I must not close my remarks respecting my own native town of Macclesfield, without mentioning the names of a few good and loyal men who distinguished themselves in every good word and work in those days. Among these was Mr. Thomas Smallwood. He was a native of Chapel-Milton. He came to Macclesfield when he was about forty years of age, and witnessed the erection of Sunderland Street Chapel. He had then become a silk dyer, and was one of the trustees of the new chapel. He married the daughter of Mr. George Pearson, who had long

been a leading man in Methodism in Macclesfield. One of his sons became a Wesleyan minister, and another became an eminent Macclesfield Methodist, spoken of as the father of Macclesfield Methodists; and a daughter became the wife of the Rev. John Bowers.

In the year 1802 it happened that three ministers were appointed to Macclesfield circuit, each of whom became very distinguished in Methodism, and presidents of respective Conferences. I refer to Mr. Entwisle, Mr. Morley, and Mr. Bunting; and the eminent Dr. Bunting was, as we have already seen, indebted to Macclesfield for his wife. Another most excellent man was Mr. Thomas Allen; he became a local preacher in 1796. He was in the habit of visiting remote country places on the Sabbath, and, like many others, was very much persecuted. Many strange things are said about him and his adventures. Frequently he was coming home across the mountains on the Sabbath night, and sometimes it would appear that his life was in his hands, but his fortitude upheld him, and I do not hear that he ever swerved from the path of duty. He had an excellent wife, and was the personal friend of the Rev. George Marsden and Jabez Bunting. His life was long spared, and the preacher's house at Sunderland Street, called Allen House, was his gift.

In 1804 Congleton was separated from Macclesfield. During that year Lorenzo Dow, from America, visited

Macclesfield, and was the means, under God, of the conversion of Joshua Thorley, who soon became eminent among the Methodists of Macclesfield. In fact, he became a pillar in the Church, and filled various official offices. An account of his life appears in the Magazine of 1848.

The name of Grace Murray, a lady of Chapel-en-le-Frith, was well known and very familiar. It was said that Mr. Wesley had his eye upon her, and had thoughts at one time of making her his wife; but it was said that she jilted him and married John Bennett, aforementioned. It is not to be wondered at that an affair of this kind should supply material for a good deal of gossip among the Methodists—it was commonly said that she repented, and that she experienced a good deal of sorrow of heart in consequence of the step which she had taken. She lived, however, to the age of eighty-eight years, and her funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Jabez Bunting.

In those days there was a very laudable practice at Sunderland Street Chapel. There was a little private corner, called "Nicodemus Corner," where shy, timid, and poor persons could attend service, and see and hear without being seen or known. This was an excellent practice, which ought to exist everywhere.

George Pearson died in the year 1807, aged eighty-

nine years. His funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Theophilus Lessey. Some time after his death it is said that he appeared to his grandson, who was then living at a considerable distance, and said to him, "Samuel, in my coat pocket there is so much money (mentioning the sum) and my class paper; take it to Thomas Smallwood." On searching the coat pocket, the identical money and paper were found. This remarkable circumstance is authenticated on undeniable authority.

We read also of Mr. Peter Lomas, Mr. John Birchenall, and Mr. Hadfield, and many others too numerous to mention, who were eminent in the ranks of Methodism in those days. Thomas Smallwood above-named reached the age of about eighty-eight years, having been a devoted Methodist and true Christian for seventy-two years. He died in 1829.

On May 30th, 1824, the New Brunswick Chapel was opened. The Rev. Jabez Bunting and the Rev. Robert Newton preached on the occasion. The collections for the day amounted to more than one hundred and fifty pounds. The cost of the chapel, with additions, was about seven thousand pounds, and about one-third of the money had previously been subscribed. One lady, a Mrs. Palfreyman, gave six hundred pounds, but died before the opening day. Among the laymen of those days, and who was able and liberal, was Mr. Thomas Brocklehurst. My father

in his young days was the personal friend and intimate acquaintance of nearly every one of the persons above-named. They were, in fact, contemporaries and fellow-labourers in every good word and work.

The Trinity Chapel in Macclesfield was not built till the year 1876. It is a very superior building, and is called by some the "West End" Chapel. It will have to stand far into the next century before its clusters of sacred memories are equal to those of Sunderland Street Chapel, which is a very common building in appearance, and yet it has been consecrated a thousand times over by the "sound of the cherubims' wings."



CHAPTER III.



It is not generally known that Mr. Wesley paid his first visit to Holmes Chapel before Methodism began to exist. He was very strict and religious at that time, and yet he had not experienced a change of heart. It happened that he and two friends with him had occasion to visit Manchester. They left Oxford on horseback, on Tuesday, March 14th, 1738, and travelled through Birmingham to Stafford. On the Thursday morning they proceeded by Lawton and Brereton Green to Holmes Chapel, where both man and horse rested for refreshment. It happened that they were shown into a room where some gentlemen were about to get dinner. The table was set and the cloth laid, and when the gentlemen sat down, Mr. Wesley, strange to say, approached the table uninvited and asked a blessing.

This singular proceeding amazed them, they stared at him and stared at one another, and wondered at the rude assumption of a man that they had never seen before. Mr. Wesley quietly followed up this bold beginning, and began to talk to them about religious things, until a very good and profound

impression was produced upon the company. This sermon of Mr. Wesley's was preached to the customers at the Red Lion Inn, in Holmes Chapel, on Thursday, the 16th of March, 1738, about three o'clock in the afternoon.

They then proceeded on their journey, and rode down Cranage Bank where the road was then only the width of a cart, and a small stream of water running down the middle; they passed the spot where the Methodist chapel now stands, crossed Dane Bridge and passed through Cranage and over Rudheath, which was then a wild open common, and through Knutsford to Altrincham, where they again rested, and reached Manchester at a late hour the same night, having ridden on horseback all the way from Stafford in one day, a distance of considerably over fifty miles, a good day's work certainly for both man and horse, and yet it was only at the beginning of his prodigious and arduous life, which was like a dozen lives crowded into one.

He returned from Manchester in the following week by the same road, halted at Knutsford, rode through Holmes Chapel a second time, and did not halt again till he reached Talk o' th' Hill. At this time Mr. Wesley was about thirty-five years of age. He had crossed the Atlantic to teach the Georgians the nature of Chistianity, but what did he learn? Why, to use his own words, "That I who went to

America to convert others was never converted myself." It was about two months after his journey through Cheshire that he first experienced a change of heart.

In or about the year 1821, my father and mother were strongly inclined to emigrate to the United States, where there seemed to be not only more room but a better chance for themselves and their seven young children; and they actually made a journey to Liverpool, where they spent several days for the purpose of making arrangements. They did not, however, absolutely decide, and after coming home my father heard by the merest accident of a large farm to let near Holmes Chapel. He went to see it, and eventually took it. This entirely knocked on the head all intentions of going abroad. Verily man proposes, but God disposes, and men are often led by a way that they know not. The improbable often happens, and this very trifling incident gave an entire change to the current of events, led us all into another channel and gave to all of us another history and another destiny. Had it not been for the fact that my parents could not succeed to their satisfaction in getting a ship to take them to New York I should not have been writing my experiences of "the land we live in."

In the year 1823 my father and mother, with all the family, left our old home in Gawsworth, and

removed to Dunkirk near Holmes Chapel. We had now a large farm, and there was no want of work for all hands. It was a very common thing for us, especially during the months of harvest, to work fifteen hours a day. My father was industrious and persevering. Times were bad, and hard work was a necessity. Milking-cows at that time cost six or seven pounds each, and the very best cow that my father bought, in 1823, cost eight pounds. This was reckoned a very extravagant price. On the following Sunday morning after we came to Dunkirk, my father and mother took me with them through the village to the Methodist chapel in Holmes Chapel.

This place was then, and has ever since been, in the Northwich Circuit, and the ministers at that time were John Reynolds and Richard Smetham. This chapel had then been built about seven years. Whether there were any people in the gallery I cannot say, but I well remember that there was not one creature besides ourselves on the floor of the chapel, except the singers, who were inside the communion rail under the pulpit. Mr. Thomas Wood played a large bass viol; he had a good voice and led the singing. I was then but a young boy, but I eyed him over very well and never forgot him. He was the son of Mr. John Wood, of Cotton, who was then the principal Methodist at Holmes Chapel.

I have often been told that after the building of

this chapel, Mr. Thomas Williams, of Croxton Hall, was the leader of the infant Society, and that it was his practice to walk from Croxton Hall to Holmes Chapel, four miles, every week, to meet his class. He had, however, other important duties at Middlewich and elsewhere, and I remember that Mr. Wood was at this time the customary leader. My father joined his class, and so continued till the year 1826. The cause was very low, and indeed almost extinct.

At this time a circumstance occurred which it was feared would entirely snuff out the feeble cause. My father and Mr. Wood were both farmers, and their land adjoined. I may here observe that bad fences and the trespass of cattle between one farmer and another have caused endless quarrels and differences throughout all ages. Long friendships have been broken, and in many cases the best of friends have become estranged for life.

One day Mr. Wood had lost a few sheep; he judged that they had got into our field, and that we probably had driven them off on the contrary side of our farm, instead of driving them back into his own field. He came up to the house to see my father, and though they stood to each other as leader and member, yet the old gentleman was evidently in a warm temper and began to be very angry. I was present, and heard every word that was spoken between them. It was a complete quarrel, and descended to unpleasant

personalities. It turned out in the end that it was all a mistake, none of us had ever seen the sheep, and they were afterwards found in another direction. The mischief, however, was done. The contention was so sharp between them that it was not possible for them to meet together in religious fellowship. This occurred in the year 1826.

I ought to remark here that this difference did not last for ever, they became good friends again after this.

In less than three days it was the talk of the neighbourhood that Mr. Wood and Mr. Slater had quarrelled, and it was concluded that all was now over with Methodism at Holmes Chapel. The subject was upon everyone's tongue. My old schoolmaster was brim full of it among the boys at school, and he had no doubt as to the result. We went to chapel as usual, but all seemed to be as frozen as winter and as black as night. Contrary, however, to all human expectation this unfortunate affair turned out rather to the furtherance of the gospel. It was the darkness before the dawn. It sometimes happens that our greatest misfortunes turn out in the providence of God to be our greatest blessings.

In the autumn of 1826, my father set out one day through Holmes Chapel to Cranage, with the view of opening up a fresh place. He found a large cottage on the verge of a large forest called Rudheath.

He arranged with the tenant to hold religious meetings, and fixed to have service every Thursday evening, and shortly afterward, every Sunday night. This did not interfere with the services at the chapel, which were held morning and afternoon only.

He commenced these new meetings single-handed, and very soon some began to pray, and others began to persecute, and in a few months a great revival of religion broke out, such as has never before or since been witnessed in these parts; numerous hardened sinners sought and found mercy. The tide of persecution ran very high, numbers of evil-disposed persons met together on Sabbath evenings for the purpose of mischief and annoyance. First one and then another were caught in the gospel net, and my father was greatly delighted when those who came to persecute remained to pray. Many of those who were then brought to God have adorned their profession from the lowest to the higher places in the Christian church, and many are gone to their reward.

I was then a schoolboy; I went to Cranage school near Holmes Chapel, (off and on) from 1823 to March, 1829. It was a very common thing for the boys to have each of them a little pie to dinner. I noticed that many of the lads took the lid off their pies, and then began with finger and thumb to pick out the fruit or meat, and to eat the best and most delicious part first, and to go on and on, finishing up with the

hard crust. My mother used to say that some people always ate their white bread first, and some people rode in their young days and walked when they were old. I was only a boy, but I always made it my practice to eat the worst and hard parts of my pie first and to save a bit of the best to the last.

This little practice, simple as it looks, seemed to be a sort of index to future life. The boys who were always in haste to eat their best first, mostly came to poverty and an early grave.

In the spring of 1827 some of the bigger boys in the school became concerned, they went to the revival meetings and began to pray. My school-master, Mr. John Betteley, was terribly puzzled to comprehend this religious movement. I remember him saying, "I've gone to church regularly enough for forty years, but I never knew anything about converting; I never knew how they did it; I should like to know how it's done. Do they read some particular prayer over 'em when they converten 'em?" The old gentleman, who was a scholarly man, clever with his pen and at figures, had gone to church all his days, and was reckoned to be conversant with the Bible, and yet how little he knew of spiritual things.

Notwithstanding all this, I remember that in after years he took credit to himself for turning out what he called "a lot of clever fellows," and he even did

me the honour to count me among the number. He could reckon up about a dozen parsons who had been schooled in his establishment. It may seem strange that he, who knew so little of religion himself, should come to be so proud of his dozen Methodist parsons. Mr. Penketh was one of his pupils, and so were John Parrott, James Bolshaw, Charles Nixon and many others. He was a good man in his way, and I have every occasion to remember him with feelings of the greatest respect. He was a man of cultivated manners, and gentlemanly bearing, and was one of the best hand-writers that I ever knew. He was also skilled with the rod and line, and occasionally came to Dunkirk for a day's fishing, and when he succeeded in landing half-a-dozen good thumping perch he was as much delighted as if he had won the Derby.

I cannot pretend to describe a tenth part of the events of those days. There is no doubt that it was one of the most remarkable revivals of religion that ever took place in this part of Cheshire. Some of our own workmen and servants became new creatures. We had then a man living with us as a farm servant who was a Scotchman. His name was Andrew Graham. His case was remarkable. He said when once he was under very deep conviction for sin, and was engaged in very earnest prayer in the granary, that the devil visibly appeared to him in the most threatening form, but, to use his own words, he said,

"I bid him to be gone, that I had done with devil and all his works." This story was repeated again and again to the crowds of people at the meetings, and was most devoutly accepted by the believing multitude.

A young lady relative of ours was over from Northamptonshire on a visit, during the spring and summer of 1827. She had been subject to a succession of epileptic fits every two or three weeks, for many years. She was brought to the foot of the cross and obtained the pardon of her sins. The wonderful part of the case is, that she was cured both soul and body, and never had another fit of any sort.

Andrew from Dunkirk was known for miles and miles round for his life and zeal, and as a champion for his Master; and to this day there are some old veterans who well remember Andrew Graham the praying Scotchman. A few years after this he was called away back to Scotland, and we never saw him again for about thirty years. He then came over, and met with a most cordial welcome from his old companions in arms. My father, his old master, had then been dead about ten years. He related to me the following circumstance, which I give in his own words; he says, "When I left Dunkirk your father called me, and he said, 'Andrew, they tell me that there is a little bird in America which sings all the year round, and it has only one song, and only one word,

and that word is "continue, continue, continue." Now Andrew, when you get back to Scotland don't forget the song of the little bird in America.' And I thank God," said Andrew, "I never forgot those parting words, though it is now thirty years since, I never forgot the little bird in America."

After this visit, which was in 1864, I never saw or heard anything of Andrew Graham. As far as we know he lived and died a true Christian.

At this time Mr. E. Jones and Mr. Thos. Hill were the travelling preachers in the Northwich circuit, and one of them was at Holmes Chapel on the Sunday morning once a fortnight. They looked with amazement on this new movement, which was mainly of an outside character, and they regarded the whole proceeding with a very jealous eye, and as a sort of split and secession.

There was, however, an end of all suspicion on this matter, when in the month of June in this year, 1827, my father came up with all his class of fifty members and applied for quarterly tickets of membership. These members were nearly all new converts, full of life and zeal. And now began the dawn of a brighter day for Methodism in Holmes Chapel. It was now seen that the little difference which had taken place between my father and Mr. Wood had resulted, contrary to all human expectation, in preserving the cause alive.

I may here mention that old Mr. Wood had five sons; John, who was a farmer in Penny's Lane—father of the late Mrs. Clough and grandfather of the present Mrs. James Hesketh. He was a sound-hearted and honest Methodist. Joseph spent his days in his native village—a very regular man. Thomas (before-mentioned) the father of the present Mrs. Stoddard, lived a checkered life, did not escape trouble, had a little weakness, and eventually his life was cut short. I knew him well from my childhood, and remember him with respect. In some of the better qualities of life he was not a whit behind any of his relatives. William was absolutely deaf, and died a bachelor. Philip, the youngest, was always true to the cause, and died suddenly in his native village.

Methodism now gained a good footing in Holmes Chapel, and though uniform success could hardly be expected, yet the cause, upon the whole, has been able to do something more than hold its own.

Methodism, in its early days at Holmes Chapel, had a most excellent friend and supporter in Miss Martha Johnstone, a maiden lady. For many long years she was a constant and devoted missionary collector, and very richly deserves honourable mention. She ended her days at Sandbach, leaving a good name behind her.

I must say a few more words about old Mr. Wood,

who was a farmer at Cotton. He was an example of constancy. He usually spoke in the lovefeasts, and he always told us that though he went for four years to a boarding school yet he did not know what the word "carnal" meant.

A few years after this, when he was getting an old man, he tasted the bitter experience of being surety, and suffered much trouble and loss. He did not long survive these things—he died in 1833. He and his wife and a granddaughter were buried inside the chapel. A short account of his life appears in the Magazine, 1833.

I may remark that Mr. Wood had a son-in-law, Mr. Thomas Jepson, who held the New Hall farm, Lach Dennis. I knew him well; he played a large bass viol at Lostock when first I went there, in 1831. His farm was said to be large and dear, the seasons very unfavourable, and farming very unprofitable. His father-in-law was surety for the rent, and the landlord was a stupid old tyrant. I knew him well. The end of it was there was a great deal of law, and a great deal of loss, and a great deal of sorrow and trouble to them both, and this unfortunate affair was also a source of much sorrow to their numerous friends.

Mr. Moses Yoxall, a small farmer in Cranage, was another son-in-law to old Mr. Wood. He was a well-meaning man, but did not rise much above the ordinary level.

Mr. Wood of the Stockery farm (a relative of Mr. Wood of Cotton) was a very regular Methodist. He afterwards removed to Sproston Hall, where he died. His son Joseph lived and died at Byley.

In these my early days Mr. Thomas Williams resided at Croxton Hall. He was an original trustee of the chapel at Holmes Chapel. He was also the early leader, and was one of the truest friends of the cause. He was also a local preacher of long standing, and was one of the most loyal and devoted men that I ever knew. His name deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance by the Methodists of Cheshire. He did not, however, escape trouble; some of his meadow land was subject to flood from the overflowing of the river Dane, and he suffered heavy losses from time to time in the destruction of his crops. He afterwards removed to Mobberley, and after a time he removed to Wimboldsley, and afterwards again to Mobberley. I was well acquainted with him for many years during the latter part of his life. He and my father were old friends when I was a boy, and I remember how proud my father and mother were to entertain him when he came to Holmes Chapel.

During his residence in Mobberley he was a farmer, and was a considerable grower and seller of wheat and other grain. I myself was then in the corn trade, and bought the corn which he had to sell, and we had

business transactions together for some years, and to this day I regard it as an honour that I was sometimes favoured at my home with visits from this most excellent man. It was then more than twenty years since I had left home, and yet many events were fresh in our recollection, and we went over the old ground with great delight to us both; and among other things he related to me the following fact, which I believe is not generally known.

He referred to the very low and almost extinct state of the cause at Holmes Chapel when I was a boy. There was then a chapel debt and no income. A meeting of the trustees was called to consider the state of things, and after much anxious deliberation they resolved to convert the chapel into cottages, as there was neither Society nor congregation, and it was in vain to struggle any longer. This decision of the trustees took place soon after the "tiff" which had taken place between my father and Mr. Wood, and when everything looked more hopeless than ever.

Fortunately, however, it happened that before there was time to begin the work, and just when the workmen were about to commence operations, there was a little blue seen in the sky, there was a turn of the tide—there was the dawn of day—there were signs of a change for the better—there was an influx of new members and an increase of the congregation, and the resolution of the trustees was never carried

out. And Mr. Williams surprised me when he added, that had it not been for my father's supreme efforts at that time, the chapel would most certainly have been made into cottages.

There is an old saying that man's extremity is God's opportunity. This conversation between myself and Mr. Williams took place about two years before his death.

Mr. Williams did not conceal from me the grief and sorrow that he had felt in the year 1835, when Mr. Sugden so recklessly and ruthlessly expelled from Society hundreds upon hundreds of persons, for no just cause whatever. But we shall see more of this in future pages.

I must now go back to the year 1827. These were the early days of a lad who was well known far and near as "little Tommy Russell." He was very short in stature, and lived as a farm servant with Mr. Jepson, of the Lightwood farm, near Holmes Chapel. It was about this time that Methodism found its way into Davenport, which is in the Congleton Circuit. The preaching services were at the house of Peter Cliffe. Little Tommy Russell had just then been converted, and being full of life and zeal he was made a blessing to the new cause at Davenport.

After this Mr. Howard, of Brereton, gave a bit of land, and a new chapel was built in 1835, and was

opened by the Rev. S. Tindall, and Mr. Summerfield, of Sandbach. Mr. John Venables was one of the pillars of those early days. He died about 1870. His son John, formerly of Allostock, but now of Biddulph; and his son Thomas, of Bagmere; are still with us, and I hope that both of them well and worthily conserve the good old family name.

Little Tommy Russell afterwards became a travelling preacher in the Primitive Methodist body, and did some faithful service in the south of England, and the name of this farmer's boy is honourably mentioned in the history of Primitive Methodism.

I must here give a short history of the Bolshaw family. They lived at Dunkirk for some years before 1823. Mr. Bolshaw was a large farmer, butcher and cattle dealer. There were no railways in those days, and Manchester was largely supplied with necessities from the neighbouring counties by horses and carts.

Cheshire was called "the garden of Manchester," and supplied a large quantity of the roots, fruits, vegetables, hay, corn, flour, meal, &c. A large quantity of dead meat was sent to Manchester from Cheshire in those days, and among the rest Mr. Bolshaw was in the habit of sending several cart loads of slaughtered fat calves and other animals every Friday, for the Saturday early morning market at Manchester. He himself drove over to the market,

and neither he, nor the horses and carts, reached home again till early on the Sunday morning.

They were strict church people, and Mrs. Bolshaw was then in the habit of attending morning service at Brereton church.

I remember in the month of April, 1823, she set out to church on the Sunday morning, and gave orders to the servants to take a horse and cart to a neighbouring pit in the fields, with a number of tubs and barrels, to fetch water for the Monday morning washing. Mr. Bolshaw had not then returned from Manchester. It happened, however, that the servants managed to back the horse and cart into the pit, and there was at once a great alarm raised, and we all ran to see what was the matter, and when I came there the empty tubs and barrels were floating about on the surface of the water, but there was not a vestige of either horse or cart to be seen, and the horse of course was drowned.

The Sabbath was not very strictly observed in those days. This happened when Mrs. Bolshaw was at church, and caused great sensation among all the people at the house.

Immediately after these things Mr. and Mrs. Bolshaw and their family removed to the village of Holmes Chapel, where many of them spent their days.

Mr. Bolshaw was a man of few words, was always supposed to be a man of impenetrable mind, and was

reckoned to be deep and stubborn. He was, nevertheless, an excellent man of business, and enjoyed a large amount of public confidence.

In the early spring of the year 1827, some of the schoolboys became concerned, and began to pray, and among many others was James Bolshaw, one of the younger sons of Mr. and Mrs. Bolshaw. He was a nice boy of about fifteen or sixteen, and was the first among all the Bolshaws, as far as I know, that began to be religious. He regularly attended the revival meetings. His father, a well-known man, who had a very hostile feeling against the Methodists, vowed vengeance, and threatened to turn him out of house and home if he persisted in going among the Methodists.

One night, James was coming home with his leader, my father, who had to pass the Bolshaws' gate, where James lived. The father had gone to bed with threatenings upon his tongue, but his mother, true to the maternal instinct, could not lock the door against her boy, but waited and heard the parting on the road: the leader said, "Jimmy, if thou art locked out follow me." The mother, who was listening, heard these words, she knew the voice, and she instantly gave them the interpretation, "If thy father and mother forsake thee, the Lord will take thee up." The words struck conviction to her conscience, and she began to see that though she had regularly gone

to church for many years, yet she now felt convinced that there was something that she knew nothing about. She began to pray, and soon found the pardon of her sins.

One evening about this time, old Mr. Bolshaw took a horsewhip to flog his lad Jim, who was then a boy of fifteen or sixteen. As he approached he heard the lad praying for his father. The mother said, "Surely you will not flog the lad for praying for you." The whip fell from his hand, and he fairly trembled with emotion, and burst into tears.

He was one of the most unlikely men in the world to yield, and yet before long he was at the footstool of mercy. He became a new man; his conversion created a great sensation in the village. He was then about fifty years of age. He became a zealous champion for the truth, and gave strong proof of the great change that was wrought in him, holding fast his integrity to the day of his death. He died in 1834, aged fifty-five years, and was buried at the Wesleyan chapel. His wife survived him for about fifteen years, and was a widow indeed. She was verily a mother in Israel. After the year 1835 she became identified with the Wesleyan Association, and spent her time in visiting the sick, and was unexampled in works of piety and charity. She died in the year 1849, aged sixty-nine years, and was buried beside her husband in the Wesleyan chapel.

James, the young convert, though only about sixteen years of age, became remarkably zealous and devoted, and was now dearly beloved by his father and mother. A very great impression was made, and the influence appeared to be irresistible. The meetings at this time were held at a cottage in Twemlow Lane Cranage, and the whole neighbourhood appeared to be stirred.

The family of the Bolshaws, at that time, was very numerous. Several of them embraced the truth. The good influence extended to another branch of the family, the Bolshaws of the Bank; the two Miss Bolshaws, and a nephew boy, cast in their lot with this Christian society, which was now becoming strong. One of them, Betsy, subsequently married her relative, Joseph Bolshaw, the brother of James. She was a most excellent and devoted Christian. They removed to Crewe, when Crewe was in its infancy, and he carried on a good business as cattle dealer and butcher for many years, and both he and his wife were ever faithful and true. She died on the 29th of May, 1874, aged sixty-seven years. Her husband, Joseph, died March 12th, 1883, and was also aged sixty-seven years, and were both buried in Crewe cemetery.

Samuel (James' eldest brother), succeeded his father in business, and for many years was the principal business man for some miles, and had a very extensive connection among the farmers, and was universally trusted as if he were their banker, and never betrayed

the trust that was reposed in him. He was loyal to the cause of Methodism. His house was open to the preachers and their friends, but he never took a leading part. He died on July 1st, 1852, aged fifty-two years. His wife survived him for about twenty-eight years, and lived and died as a Christian in November, 1880, aged eighty-two years. His son Samuel succeeded him in business, and sustained the good name of the family, but was not without a weakness.

His wife came of a good stock. She was the daughter of Mr. Elisha Walker, who was a farmer at Brindley Green, in Brereton, and was a man of standing, and had a good name in connection with the Methodist Free Church at Sandbach.

Mr. Bolshaw, though a very young man, was not only a farmer but had also a considerable business, which brought him into much company, and he was, therefore, subjected to a good deal of temptation, which, in its results, was not conducive to religious life.

Many men—good and honourable, and who stand well before the world—have suffered in their heart and life by unsuitable companions.

His wife before her marriage had the reputation of being a most excellent young woman. It is, however, not certain whether she continued to possess and to exercise judiciously the irresistible power which a pure minded woman has over her

husband, but he never was the same good and sober man that he had previously been. She died in the year 1875, aged thirty-eight years. Her husband survived her only about two years. "Verily" as Solomon saith, "one sinner destroyeth much good."

My space will not allow me to go into all the branches of the Bolshaw family, several of whom deserve to be very favourably noticed, and others are gone to their reward; and I believe that Mrs. Oldfield* of Holmes Chapel is now the only survivor of a family which at one time numbered about sixteen children, and I believe that she does credit to the old family name. I must now return to James, who was afterwards apprenticed to a provision dealer in Macclesfield. His master paid no regard to the Sabbath, and James conscientiously refused to violate the Sabbath by doing unnecessary work on that day. His master became at length so enraged that he threw his indentures at him, which James quietly pocketed and walked away. He afterwards obtained a situation in the Customs House in Liverpool, where he remained for a number of years, and became a highly gifted and excellent local preacher. His health, however, failed him, and for some years he was superannuated. He died at Holmes Chapel in December, 1861, aged forty-nine years. He was the first of all the Bolshaw family to embrace the gospel,

* Mrs. Oldfield died recently.

and to receive the blessings of experimental religion ; and to his honour be it spoken, having put his hand to the plough he never looked back, and never lost his evidence. He and myself first became friends as boys at Cranage school, and being kindred spirits, this friendship became more and more cemented as years went on, and I always regarded him as one of the most pure-minded and steadfast Christians that I ever knew. I shall never forget my last interview with him shortly before he died. His one great business was to show us how Christians should live, and how they should die.

I must not omit to mention my old friend John Penketh, who was born in last century, 1799. I first knew him in 1824. I believe that he was then married, and held a farm in Cranage under L. Armitstead, Esq., of Cranage Hall, whose brother, the Rev. John Armitstead, lived at the Hermitage, and about 1830 succeeded Mr. Hodges as Vicar of Holmes Chapel. He afterwards succeeded to the Vicarage of Sandbach, where his son succeeds him as Vicar. When first I knew Mr. Penketh he walked past the chapel to the church. We often met him in the chapel bank with his prayer book under his arm. He was a member of the choir at the church, and indeed he generally played music at church on Sundays, and took his fiddle to wakes and sports during other days, and played for the amusement of the company.

I remember one Sunday morning as we were walking down to the chapel we met Mr. Penketh, as usual, with his prayer book under his arm walking up to the church. My father (who knew well how to be plain and faithful) said, "Good morning, Mr. Penketh, do you carry your religion under your arm or under your waistcoat?" This homely question gave great umbrage to Mr. Penketh, and he simply made a puff and went on his way. He was not only a church singer and village musician, but he was also the parish constable before the days of our police, and he had authority to apprehend offenders.

In those days there was a man named John Lea, who was a working corn miller at Cranage mill, and was reckoned a very wicked man, and cursed and swore at people who came to the mill. One of my father's servants got a share of the curses, which prompted my mother to send him a message "that hell was not prepared for dogs." He made no reply to this message. One day this man Lea was accused of a murderous attack upon his wife, and it became the duty of Mr. Penketh to take him into custody. This caused a great sensation among the school lads. It was said that the row was caused by Lea being unfaithful to his wife. I do not remember many particulars of the affair, except the following doggerel verse which somebody composed at that time, and which the lads at school took care to learn, and to

commit to memory much more eagerly than their proper school lessons :

“ Blessed is he that has a good wife,
But more blessed is he that has none ;
And cursed is he that goes after a whore
And leaves a good wife at home.”

It was good fun for us school lads to see Mr. Penketh displaying the emblem of his authority in the shape of a constable's staff, about seven feet tall, with the official knob at the top, and to see him take into custody the cursing, swearing, dusty miller, and to walk him off. The sequel to these proceedings is not remembered.

Mr. Penketh, like many other men, may thank his wife. Her father was a small farmer in Holmes Chapel, and was a Methodist, but had a little weakness. He gave ten pounds towards the new chapel, but durst not let his landlord, J. B. Hall, of the Hermitage, know, lest he should lose his farm, as Mr. Hall was an avowed enemy of Methodism. Mrs. Penketh had some trouble with her husband.

It is sometimes said that every man has some experience of “the besetting sin,” some one thing and some another, and in many cases it sticks like the bark to a tree. Mr. Penketh's besetment was peculiar. He could not resist the temptation to take his fiddle to the country wakes, and play with his fiddle while the villagers danced.

He had many struggles, but he yielded at length to the entreaties of his wife, and on the 29th of May, 1828, he burned all his vain and carnal music, and thus at one stroke he voluntarily disabled himself from all further fiddling at wakes. He forsook the church, and began to attend the Methodist chapel, and joined the Society, and became a devoted Christian. He came on the Plan on trial as a local preacher in the autumn of 1836. He continued as a farmer in Cranage till 1866, when he, like many others, lost his live stock by the rinderpest. He says that his landlord promised to allow him eighteen shillings per head towards the loss of his cattle; but he raised his rent instead, and gave him nothing. His losses were so heavy that he was obliged to give up his farm. His long and faithful services were, however, remembered by his friends, who laid their heads together and subscribed a sum sufficient to buy him a life annuity of twenty pounds a year, which he continues to receive from that day to this. The late Mr. William Clarke, of Cogshall Hall, deserves to be remembered for the part he took in this laudable work.

In July, 1884, Mr. Penketh preached at Lostock, on the anniversary of his eighty-fifth birthday. His text was JOSHUA XIV., 10,—“I am this day fourscore and five years old.” He then said that he had preached over three thousand sermons, and had

travelled some thousands of miles, and had often by day and night been at the bedside of the sick and dying. His public work was now near its end, but he still lives.

About the year 1830, my brother, John Allen, began to learn Latin and Greek, and went to the Cambridge University. He, however, suffered from some ailment, which interfered with his studies. Nevertheless, he persevered, and became very learned. All the Latin and Greek authors, and also Euclid and algebra, were easy as A B C to him. He wrote a poetic work called "Shadows of Thought," which may be seen at the Reference Library in Manchester. He lived the life of a bachelor at Heaton House, near Leek, and died there in 1872, and was buried in Leek cemetery.

In the year 1835, there was a serious division in the Northwich Circuit, and Holmes Chapel felt the full force of it. Most of the Bolshaw family became members of the Wesleyan Association, and they sought refuge in a room which was then called the Band Room, near Alome Bridge, a place of revival notoriety. This room had been erected by my father some years previously as an appendage to the Wesleyan chapel, little thinking, at that time, that it would become the shelter and hiding place of the new community. This room was constantly used as a preaching place until the year 1851, when it was

superseded by the erection of the new chapel at the iron bridge.

The land for this little sanctuary was bought from Joseph Moores, who was the owner of a cottage and garden. His son Elijah succeeded him on the little family patrimony. My brother, John Allen, rendered good service in the negotiations, and, being a Latin scholar, was anxious to give a finishing touch peculiar to himself. He was allowed to have his way, and to this day we read at the front of the chapel, "*Deo dedicatum*,"—dedicated to God. It was built in 1851, and was opened on April 23rd of that year. Rev. S. S. Barton, Rev. John Peters, and Rev. John Guttridge were the preachers. A great tea meeting was held on May 5th; Rev. W. Patterson, the president, was there. I was one of the speakers. The entire collections reached fifty-two pounds.

Belonging to the Society, which was now meeting in the band room, were three brothers of the name of Nixon: Jonathan, James and Charles. Jonathan had a wife, and two or three children. He lived at a cottage on the top of Cranage Bank. The other two brothers were single young men, and lived near Saltersford. They were all religious, and Charles was a local preacher. It happened one day, in or about the year 1837, that they were all working together, and were reaping corn in a field; in the afternoon, after sitting down for a few minutes to

eat and drink, and before setting to work again, the two eldest agreed to have a trial of strength in wrestling as a sort of pleasant exercise, and all in perfect good temper. It happened, however, that they fell together, and Jonathan received some injury to the spinal cord (as the people said), or spinal marrow, and was mortally hurt. He died in a day or two. James was heart-broken. A coroner's inquest was held, and the jury returned a verdict of "Death from misadventure." The sensation was painful among the religious people, and yet there was no great blame, as they were well known to be perfectly friendly with each other.

My father, who was now eighty years of age, still continued to manage all his farming and other business with untiring energy and perseverance. He had been the leading spirit in the great religious movement for about twenty-five years, and was still looked up to as the veteran chief and as a patriarch possessed of the ripest and most profound experience in gospel truth and spiritual life.

There was always a band of faithful and loyal men and women who stood by him in every good word and work. There was old Mrs. Bolshaw, before-mentioned, who was, verily, a widow indeed. There were also the Miss Bolshaws of the Bank, and other members of the Bolshaw family; there was young Thomas Bolshaw of the Bank, who afterward removed

to Crewe, where he lived as a Christian all his days, and died at Winterley in 1886, aged seventy-three years. There was William Shaw, an example of constancy, and Samuel Swain. I must not omit Richard Taylor, a shopkeeper in the village, a good and zealous man, and yet a sort of curiosity. He had a very large family of children, and when the nineteenth child came, and the people teased him about his family flock, he simply replied, "Yes, my missis is a fruitful little vine; we have just begun of the fourth half-dozen!"

Thomas Kinder deserves to be named. He was my father's fast friend for a generation, honest and sincere. He held a very little farm in Sproston. He reaped his little field of wheat with his own hand, and set up every sheaf, and then entered his house and died in 1858, and was buried at the Bridge chapel.

Old Mr. Thomas Cross, formerly of Barnton, and father of Mr. John Cross, of Saltersford, was like-minded with my father, and was faithful and true till death.

I must not omit the name of William Sherratt, who was a relative of the Bolshaws, and assisted in their business. He was a local preacher for many years, and no man had a better name among his Christian brethren. He died in 1867. He had an excellent wife, and there were many other excellent

women, whose names, though omitted here, are nevertheless in the Book of Life.

One very valuable member of this devoted band was old Samuel Pierpoint. Formerly he was a carrier with horse and cart between Northwich and Congleton. No man had made more vows or had tried more earnestly to overcome a besetment than he had. He had fallen and fallen, perhaps a hundred times, and on one occasion, on the renewal of tickets, it was proposed to strike out his name absolutely. He had a weakness for drink, and his fate was trembling in the balance, when my father, as leader, and who had a large sympathy for the weak and the wayward, said, "Let us try him just another quarter." Some one told old Samuel of his narrow escape, and this little incident was the turning-point in his life, and, in fact, it became his salvation, and he once more vowed that this stretch of mercy should not be lost upon him. He instantly joined the total abstinence society, and for many years maintained his position as an eminent Christian man and a pillar in the Church. After this he became a farmer, and lived and died at the same farm in Cotton, which had formerly been occupied by Mr. Wood.

My mother died in the year 1852. She had ever been one such as those described by Milton:—

"Who study household good,
And good works in her husband did promote."

My father died in November, 1854, aged eighty-three years, and it may be said of him, as it was said of Moses, that down to the last "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," and few men have left a better testimony behind them. They were both interred in the family grave in Gawsorth, where the family had resided for many generations. His life is written in the Wesleyan Association Magazine for the year 1856, and among other things, it is said of him that he had a wonderful experience, that he had studied the Pilgrim's Progress so thoroughly that he knew every step of the road from the City of Destruction to the bank of the river.

In writing this short history of events which came under my own notice, I am fully aware that I am touching only the fringe of the subject, and I purposely omit (for the most part) the names of those, who, like myself, still survive—when we are gone, possibly some generous pen may write a kind word about us if we honestly deserve it; if not, let our "names be written in the earth." I should be glad, if I had time and space, to speak of many others of my contemporaries whose names deserve honourable mention, but I must leave it to others to supply my lack.

I ought, however, to give the name of old William Kennerly. He was a constant churchman, but could not read a single letter till after his conversion, when

he was over forty years of age. He was a regular farm labourer for thirty years after this, and his wages were seven shillings per week and his victuals, and yet he not only managed to live creditably, but he also managed to pay six pounds for Matthew Henry's Commentary, which became his study and his solace in his later years. What an example for the loafers of these days.

I will mention another poor working man, Robert Rimmer, of Cranage. He was a very handy little fellow, about five feet in height, generally earned one shilling a day and his victuals. For many long years he worked like a nigger, and lived like a Christian. He always appeared respectable as a working man, and never complained. I regard him as a sort of hero whose name deserves to be handed down to posterity.

There were many other farm servants, both male and female, and many other working persons who, about these times, became examples of piety and devotion—I treasure their memory.

Among the numbers of persons about Rudheath and Cranage, I ought to mention the name of Stephen Carter, a schoolfellow, who became a pious young man, and afterwards left the neighbourhood. There were also some of the sons of Mr. John Witter, of the Leese. The family had lived there since 1777. Two of the sons, Thomas and John, removed

to Wheelock, and I have ever heard a good report of them, and that they lived as good men live, and died as good men die. I am glad to hear that the good name still survives, and that the good seed which was sown fifty years since is still yielding a bountiful harvest. Verily "wisdom is justified of her children."

There are many other names that I ought to mention, but want of time and space must be my excuse. I must, however, add to my list the name of Mr. Samuel Carter, now a tailor and draper in Sandbach. His father was in the same trade near Cranage bridge over sixty years since, and according to the custom of those times, he frequently worked and made up clothes at the houses of his customers. He and two or three of his sons were so employed at our house from the days of my early boyhood. One of the sons was the above-named Samuel, who, to this day remembers measuring and turning me out in my first Sunday suit of jacket and trousers. He remembers that one day, sitting on his shop board, my mother spoke to him, and said, "Sammy, the master has been saying that thou would make a nice lad to attend our meetings, and to serve the Lord." "Well then," said Sammy, "I'll go to the next meeting." This led to his conversion, and from that day to this he has never lost his hold or broken his connection with praying people.

CHAPTER IV.



T is now between fifty and sixty years since that I became a resident in Allostock in the parish of Lower Peover. I had not then got through my teens, and I had scarcely ever been five miles from the domestic hearth. I was, however, old enough to act very wisely in one respect. I was careful not only to consult my father, but I was also careful to consult my mother, who was not only a dear and excellent mother, but was also blest with a sound heart and a clear head above many. I took her with me to see the place which became my future home. I listened to her counsel and did not depart from it. I am not ashamed to say this, and I will take this opportunity of saying, that in my opinion it would be a boundless blessing to thousands of our young men if they would "go and do likewise." Behold it is written, "Forsake not the law of thy mother."

The parochial chapelry of Lower Peover, embraces four townships, namely, Lower Peover, Little Peover, Plumbley and Allostock. It is more than five hundred years since the church was built, and was then described in the old register as the daughter of the old mother church of Great Budworth.

When first I came into the chapelry, there was no church at Toft, or Tabley, or Lostock, or Marston, or Rudheath, or Byley. The old parish church of Budworth is some seven miles away, and stands in the middle of a vast parish which may be roughly estimated at fourteen miles long and six or seven broad. The living of the whole parish is supposed to reach three thousand pounds, more or less, and this enormous revenue has been received for centuries on the pretence of maintaining a great spiritual light in the parish, and on the further pretence of teaching divine truth and promoting religious life among the parishioners. If all this money had been thrown into the sea for generations, it probably would have been none the worse for the people. There is not much difference between having a blind guide and no guide at all.

The old Book speaks of "blind watchmen," "ignorant," "dumb dogs," "greedy dogs," "shepherds that cannot understand," "every one for his gain."

It is no great wonder that this state of things had been felt as a grievous burden for generations. The religious aspirations of many persons in this great parish could be no longer crushed, and what the apathetic Church with all its wealth and resources did not, and would not, and could not do, the people determined voluntarily and at their own cost to do

for themselves, and with my own eyes I have seen about twenty Nonconformist chapels built in the villages and hamlets of this large parish. If there is any living man disposed to find fault with all this multiplication of chapels, I ask him whose fault is it? and who is it that deserves to bear the blame?

It is now more than four hundred years since, that Robert Grosvenor, Esq., lived at Hulme Hall in Allostock. It was the family seat, and was a large establishment surrounded and fortified by water called "The Moat," which still exists. The hall was approached by a movable bridge which was drawn up every night; faithful sentinels were told off to keep watch and ward day and night; news and reports of all sorts were carried by mounted messengers on fiery steeds, swift as the storm; this was the telegraph of these feudal times.

"Most of the ancient mansion has fallen a prey to old Time, and has sunk beneath the weight of years; some of it has vanished in my own day, and even the old horse-mounts which I well remember are mostly gone. Earthworks called "cops" still remain in the adjacent grounds, and these tell us more plainly than words, of fears and feuds, and of strife and peril, and that men in those days carried their lives in their hands.

In these by-gone ages Vale Royal, Hulme Hall, and Barnshaw were among the most illustrious

houses in Cheshire. Each of these great houses was supported by a troop of retainers, mounted on their sturdy steeds, wearing the livery and uniform of their respective lords, and were seen galloping to and fro along the road from Vale Royal to Barnshaw, in obedience to the commands of their noble masters, who in those days held high court and ruled supreme, and against whom not a dog did move his tongue. Hulme Hall was a sort of caravansary, or half-way house, where a body of retainers was constantly stationed.

The river Weaver was not made navigable for two hundred years after this. There was no bridge at Northwich. There is a little street called Watling Street, a sort of Appian Way, leading down into the river, whence a pavement was laid in the bed of the stream, which flowed across this pavement, and being generally only knee-deep, was fordable for horses. In flood times, and on doubtful occasions, a mounted messenger was sent to examine the state of the river to see if it was fordable. Sometimes the impatient and impetuous troops ventured into the stream when the river was fresh, and were carried into deep water, both man and horse, but they generally managed to land all right, as the banks were not then blocked with buildings.

There was then no canal, and probably not one single house between Witton (formerly called Wych-

town) and Hulme Hall. Penny's Lane was originally three or four times its present breadth, and was covered with grass and rushes in summer, and mud and clay in winter, and was passable only on horse-back. From Lach Green, which was then an open common, the road entered Hulme domain, and passed between Hulme Hall and Sculshaw Lodge, through the brook at the dams in Allostock, by the Cross Lanes, to Barnshaw, which was then the seat of the lords of Barnshaw.

This was the great military road from Vale Royal to Barnshaw. A large part of this road fell into disuse some generations since, and has long been added to adjoining fields. I myself have gone over every yard of the ground, and have been able to trace the old original road almost from end to end.

At this time carriages of every sort were almost entirely unknown in Cheshire, and our forefathers had not begun to use stone and gravel for the repair of the roads. At the time of which I am speaking, an ancestor of the present Duke of Westminster resided at Hulme Hall, and was the Lord of the Manor of Allostock. The events of those times have not so far as I know been recorded by any historian, and it is impossible for me, with all my historic research, to rescue a tithe of them from oblivion.

Delamere Forest in these remote days was entirely wild and desolate from Kelsal to Over, and also from

Kelsal to Vale Royal and Hartford. There was not a house, nor a fence, nor a carriage road, but merely a sort of sandy driftway for horses.

It is said that in the days of the Grosvenors of Hulme, there was an old grist mill at the dams in Allostock. The old mill dam is plain to be seen to this day, and there are remains of the old weir and wheel race. It is not certain whether the old mill was burnt down, or whether it sank beneath the weight of years, be this as it may, the lord of the manor declined to rebuild it, and decided to build a new mill, a mile lower down the stream, where it would be more convenient for the hall, and he caused a new cut to be made nearly a mile in length, carrying the stream along higher ground skirting the border of Peover, and at this place a new mill was put up for the service of the great household. The new mill was thatched with straw, slates were then unknown. The machinery was worked by an over-shot water-wheel about eight feet high. Here it stood for about three centuries, but the common fate of mills overtook it at last, and it was destroyed by fire about a hundred years since.

On May 26th, 1857, the giant King Oak was felled at Hulme Hall, and was sold for fifty pounds. It is supposed that this very old oak has nobly stood its ground ever since the days of the Grosvenors, four hundred years since. I was grieved to see it fall.

The great Grosvenor family had left Hulme Hall some generations before this last event, and were succeeded by the Shakerleys. A new mill was built, and the new water-wheel was made to revolve in a contrary direction, and the motion of all the other wheels was also reversed. The metal of the old wheels is very superior in quality, and the style is peculiar to the period. It is almost certain that these very wheels were fixed in their present position by order of the Grosvenors of Hulme, and they supply visible and irresistible evidence that they have been at work for four or five hundred years, and promise to do duty for another century; the revolutions of these old wheels may be estimated to reach many thousands of millions.

In my searchings for confirmation of my history, I have made it my business to consult the old metal wheels, and they tell me in language plainer than words that they have been constantly doing their duty ever since the days of the Grosvenors of Hulme. We have heard of "sermons in stones," and I learn a valuable and veritable historic lesson in reading and studying the old mill wheels.

His Grace the present Duke of Westminster is a descendant and representative of the illustrious Grosvenor family, formerly of Hulme in Allostock.

It was on the 21st of July, 1885, that the Duke, accompanied by the charming young Duchess,

visited Northwich on the occasion of opening the library which was presented to the town by Mr. Brunner, M.P.

The official business was done in the Market Hall, when his grace took occasion to tell us publicly that his ancestors formerly lived at Hulme, in Allostock, and as I myself had been a resident on the property for many years, I listened with great interest to the remarks made by his grace. He did not, however, tell us of the fights and feuds, and of the hairbreadth escapes which were the daily experiences of those times.

If the Duke is possessed of his ancient family records, I have no doubt that they will be found confirmatory in the main of my history, which is partly gathered from local tradition, supported by personal observation and other undeniable evidence.

I must now proceed to another subject. When I first came to live in Allostock, the Rev. John Holme had been perpetual curate or vicar of Lower Peover for about two years. In addition to his parochial duties he was also the village schoolmaster, and he continued to fill both these important positions until the year 1874, a period of about forty-five years.

He was a man of good physical presence, and during all these years he maintained an unspotted reputation, and a good name among all his people. About thirty years before his death he had the church

restored, and it rested with him to a large extent to beg the money. On one occasion he went to see old Doctor Taylor (of Oldfield Lane notoriety) who had property in the parish. After Mr. Holme had stated his case, the old doctor, who was often slovenly and greasy in his appearance, called to his cashier in the next room, who like his master was rough and dirty in his appearance, and asked, "Bob, hast any money?" Bob replied, "Aye, mester, I've a bit." "Then," said his master, "here is a poor parson come a begging; thou mun give him fifty pound. Parsons are always poor." Mr. Holme, who was a gentlemanly-looking man, was amused to be described by the rough old doctor as "a poor parson come a begging," and he took pleasure as long as he lived in relating his successful visit to old Dr. Taylor.

He was a most indefatigable man, and possessed of good plain common sense. For many years he even wrote out rate books for the overseers of Allostock, and for many years (though not a rate-payer in Allostock) he was always delighted to attend the vestry meetings of his Allostock parishioners. And when the time came that church rates were abolished, steps were at once taken to make provision for the emergency. A meeting was called, and it was agreed unanimously henceforth to collect a voluntary rate, and though there were three chapels in his parish, and great numbers of Dissenters, yet

there was not one who refused to pay the rate. And Mr. Holme himself once made the following remark to me :—"I must confess," said he, "that I get more real friendship and support from my Dissenting parishioners than I get from my own people."

The inhabitants of Allostock having decided to express their sense of his personal worth and long services, invited him to a dinner, where he was received with much cordiality by his parishioners, and was presented with a very handsome ormolu timepiece and side ornaments, which had been selected by personal friends, and which had cost us about thirty pounds. I myself, as chairman of the committee, had the honour of the presentation, which he knew well how to acknowledge. In addition to the parishioners there was a good number of other friends present; nothing could be more cordial and affectionate than this, one of the last meetings of the vicar with his people.

I have in my journal of June 19th, 1872, a memorandum of the occasion, and adding that it was a perfect success.

In the following year I removed from Sculshaw Lodge, and on February 4th, 1874, he and Mrs. Holme came to see me at Witton Lodge, a few days before I set out for the Holy Land. They two, and myself, and my late dear wife, dined together for the last time. I had a presentiment at the time that we

should never all meet together again. I wrote him one or two long letters from the far East, which he rejoiced to receive. He died on the very day of my return from Jerusalem. I was too late to see him alive. I attended his funeral at Peover, on April 24th, 1874. The late Lord De Tabley, and very many friends were present, and we all lamented the fall of a man who had so long and so well served his generation.

If all the ministers of the Church in these lands could only see, as others see, the selfishness and unfairness of exclusive privilege, and could be induced to give up their assumed right of domination, or in other words, if they would only learn to live for others as did the late Mr. Holme, they would have no need to dread disestablishment and disendowment, for in such an event they would find the Dissenters to be their truest and best friends.

Mr. Dean, Vicar of Tabley, wrote a short memoir of Mr. Holme. He merely speaks of Mr. Holme as an excellent man humanly speaking, but has not a word to say of his religious life.



CHAPTER V.



METHODISM first found its way into Lostock, Plumbley, and Pickmere about the year 1816. At that time Mr. George Dodson lived at Holford mill. In those days, long before the days of railways, Manchester was largely supplied with flour by the corn millers in Cheshire, who bought wheat from the farmers in Cheshire, and also at the markets of Whitchurch and Market Drayton. Mr. Dodson regularly attended the Liverpool and Manchester markets. He often kept his mill running on Sunday. He was, nevertheless, a strict Churchman, walked regularly to Witton church, and read his Bible at home in the evening. He had some concern for his neighbours, and consulted his clergyman whether anything could be done for them. The reply was "No; unless the Methodists do it." He frankly admitted the spiritual destitution of the people, and he also frankly admitted the inability of the Church to supply the spiritual want. The reason of the Church's helplessness in this matter is not far to seek. The confession of the vicar tells of a sad state of things.

It happened about this time that Thomas Dutton, a working corn-miller, called upon Mr. Dodson to

enquire for work. He was a stranger, but Mr. Dodson took down his name and address, and told him that if he should want a man he would let him know. Dutton had scarcely gone away when a Mr. Jonathan Gilgrass, of Marston, a local preacher of good standing, called upon Mr. Dodson and said, "Why, the man Dutton, that has been asking for work, is a Methodist local preacher." Upon hearing this, Mr. Dodson sent for him and engaged him. Mr. Dodson watched him for a week or two, but never spoke about religion, and at length he said, "Dutton, I hear that you are a preacher. If you will preach I will fit up a room for you to preach in." Dutton assented to this. The room was fitted up, and the place was crowded to hear the young miller. This was the beginning of Methodism in this neighbourhood, and we shall see that before long it spread itself in different directions, and I believe that I am warranted in saying that the little church which had its birth in the little room at Holford mill became in its turn the Methodist parent of Lostock, Pickmere, Plumbley, and Bradshaw Brook. This was a new thing in the land. People from Lostock, Plumbley, Pickmere and elsewhere flocked to this place, which soon became a great revival centre.

Mr. S. Carter, who died in Allostock in 1882, was one of the survivors who attended those first Methodist services at Holford mill. Mr. Joseph Williamson

was another. He died about 1842. I visited him on his deathbed. He was the father of Mr. B. Williamson, of Plumbley. Great numbers of sinners were converted about this time, and great zeal was shown by the young converts. Mr. Dodson himself had not hitherto attended the meetings; a class was now formed, and one of Mr. Dodson's daughters said to him, "Father, you should go and see, and hear for yourself," and he then went for the first time to a Methodist class meeting, and he afterwards remarked that he had learned more in one night as to the "plan of salvation" than he had learned in all the years that he had gone to church. He never entirely lost his regard for the church, and yet he always felt how pitiable was the state of our countless thousands who have no better spiritual guides.

Holford mill at this time seems to have had no strong connection with other societies. This was the rallying point. Great were the crowds, great was the excitement, and great were the results, as we shall see.

Mr. Dodson had two sons, William and James, and several daughters. His daughters were now all married, and having given up the mill at Holford to his eldest son, William, he himself removed to a small farm in Plumbley. He had now some thoughts of a second wife, though getting on in life, and cast his eye upon a Miss Kinsey, of Holford Hall. In going

to see her he had to cross a large brook, over which there was a wood plank which served as a bridge. His visits to Holford Hall were the subject of some gossip, and it entered into the head of a fellow in the neighbourhood to play a terrible practical joke, for the purpose of mere fun and mischief, and he decided to take a saw and cut the plank on the under side, so that it might snap in two and plunge Mr. Dodson in the stream.

We have heard of white angels and black angels, and while the foolish fellow, with saw in hand, was just about to do the reckless deed, the white angel whispered in his ear, "Suppose! suppose! suppose, and suppose he should be drowned!" The thought was enough, he skulked home like a thief, and kept this wicked thought deep in his heart until after Mr. Dodson's death.

It was in or about the year 1825, that Mr. Dutton the miller took a small farm belonging to his master at Bradshaw Brook in Allostock; he afterwards removed to Wybunbury, and afterwards he occupied a mill, now pulled down, in Crewe. He was a fair preacher, and was a man of good standing. The last time I saw him was in Chester, in 1842. This would be about twenty-five years after the time when he preached his first sermon at Holford mill.

Mr. Dodson eventually married Miss Kinsey, and a better wife no man ever had. The issue was one

child, the wife of Mr. Wm. Hesketh, who is, I believe, the only surviving child of the late Mr. G. Dodson.

In the year 1834 he removed to Bradshaw Brook, where he built and fitted up a preaching room which served for many years. It has, however, been succeeded some twenty years since by a very good chapel, where there has been a good cause from that day to this. Mr. Dodson met with an accident in 1835 which shortened his life. He died in April 1837. His life (more fully) appears in the Magazine for 1838, which is in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Hesketh of Lostock. So ended the career of a man who had done more, directly and indirectly, for Methodism for several miles round, than any other man living or dead.

Mr. Dodson's son William was one among the first converts at Holford. He was then about twenty years of age. He soon became a local preacher, and was a young man of quiet and gentlemanly demeanour, and maintained a very good standing all his days, and filled almost every office in the church, and was for a long time circuit steward. He fetched his wife from Nantwich circuit, and a most excellent wife she proved to be. Curious stories are related of some of her relatives; one of them, who was a farmer and local preacher, would set out on horseback to a country appointment, and after going some miles would alight from his horse, and kneel down

on the ground and pray very earnestly, and would re-mount his horse and ride home. He said that he would not go another yard unless he were sure that God would go with him. It is also said of one of her relatives, who was a local preacher, that he was such a strong believer in the doctrine of self-denial, that he never would follow his fancy or indulge his inclination in anything whatever; and it is said that even in the matter of marriage he refused to follow his choice, and actually selected a lady who occupied, not the first, but the second place in his affections. I do not give any opinion as to the accuracy of this story, but supposing it to be true, I fear that he would not, in this degenerate age, find many converts to his theory of self-denial, nor many disciples who would in this particular follow in his steps.

Mr. Wm. Dodson died, aged forty-one, in the year 1844, leaving a widow, an excellent woman, who died some years since. He also left one son and one daughter, who survived their father many years. The daughter, Miss Jane Dodson, was a most devoted and excellent young lady. They are all dead, and one of the best local names in the district has become extinct.

Mr. Dodson's second son James, was in some office or place of business in Manchester, where he was taken ill, and died at the age of twenty-three, after

three days illness; and there was great lamentation about him. He was said to have been an exceedingly pious young man. His funeral sermon was preached in Plumbley chapel, by Captain Barlow, about fifty-five years since. I was present, and to this day I remember some parts of the sermon. The preacher told us that London might be the metropolis of England, but, said he, "Manchester is the metropolis of the world," and he further said that in this great town, the world's metropolis, this young man had ever maintained the even tenor of his way, and had not defiled his garments. He was buried at Witton, in or about the year 1832.

Among other good things which were done at Holford mill, was the establishment of a Sunday school, which was a very new thing then. John Stubbs, a shoemaker of Lostock, Henry Richardson of Wincham, and William Leigh of Marston, were appointed teachers. Old John Stubbs has been dead many years; and Henry Richardson, a pious old man, died only a few years since. I knew them well. William Leigh, lately dead, was living witness of these things.

The public service was on Sunday night only, except once a fortnight on the week evening. Mr. Jonathan Gilgrass is said to have been the first class leader. He was in the shoe trade, and lived at Marston. He was a man of gentlemanly bearing,

and was a very acceptable local preacher, and very often it fell to his lot to take the pulpit at Holford mill. When I was in my teens, and afterwards, he often came to Holmes Chapel, and his pleasing manners made him a great favourite with us all. When I was about fifteen I walked to Middlewich, and heard him preach in the little old chapel in Pepper Street. His text was, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," &c. Though only a lad, I was greatly delighted with his sermon.

He removed to Liverpool, probably about the year 1837, where he spent the remainder of his days, and died in April, 1854. I have been told that he died as good men do. His remains were brought by rail to Hartford, and were buried at Witton. He had a brother who was a missionary, and died on the mission field. I may here observe that with all Mr. Gilgrass' excellencies, he did that which was unlawful. He married for his first wife a daughter of Mr. Bradshaw, one of the leading Methodists of Northwich. After some time she died, and Mr. William Dodson preached her funeral sermon at Pickmere. Subsequently he married the sister of his deceased wife. It is quite true that very many excellent men have done the same without rebuke; I merely state the fact, but I cast no imputation.

Among others who did good service at Holford,

was Edward Dignum, of Northwich; Joseph Nixon, of Kingsley; and William Gerrard, of Cuddington. I knew them all well, and shall not forget to give them a place in my history. Joseph Nixon had a sermon on "Why stand ye here all the day idle," which was remembered for many years. William Gerrard caused much amusement in some quarters by his old-fashioned costume and homely style; they said that he was like the Pilgrim Fathers, and some said that he was within a hairbreadth of being a Quaker. There was, however, in him the genuine ring, and nobody doubted the quality of the metal.

I must not forget old John Sutton. He was a poor shoemaker of Pickmere, and was commonly called "Little Sutton," being humpbacked. He was one of the Holford mill champions, and was wonderfully popular and useful.

It was in or about the year 1823, that religious services began to be held at the house of Mr. Joseph Newton, in Marston. This was probably the first off-shoot from Holford mill, and indeed, the cause now began to branch in all directions.

Pickmere chapel was built in 1826, and was opened by the Rev. James Everitt. Mr. Dodson himself took charge of the class for a time. I have often had the account of these things from his own lips. He was succeeded, from 1827 to 1832, by his son William, and the young cause there was nursed for

some years by Mr. Dodson and his son William, and yet there was a good and devoted band upon the ground who were true to the cause.

These were the days of Captain Barlow, who it was said, had fought at Waterloo about a dozen years before this. He lived for a time at Pickmere, and was a local preacher. He and Mr. Jonathan Gilgrass sometimes travelled in company to remote parts of the circuit, and when I was a boy, they were regarded as a host. The captain was a bold soldierly looking man, and spoke—as far as I can remember—in a very pompous style. He sometimes gave notice of a sensational sermon; I remember his preaching a sermon on “Catholic Emancipation,” a subject which was then agitating the public mind, but I was too young to grasp the drift of his discourse. At another time he took occasion of a public movement to give us a sermon on Sabbath observance; I remember his showing us how he would take a strong chain, and how he would lock every toll-gate in the country during the Sabbath. His remarks from first to last were generally of the cutting and slashing character; if he had lived in these days, there would have been no toll-gates to lock. He left the neighbourhood a while after this, and commenced operations in the view of reclaiming Chat Moss, and it was said that he almost ruined himself in carrying out his experiments. I saw him soon after this, when I had grown

up a young man, and told him I was afraid that he had been "labouring for that which profiteth not." He promptly replied that if he had another fortune to spend, he should not hesitate to spend it on Chat Moss; I saw at once that he was too sanguine to be sound, and too enthusiastic to be practical. It was his head and not his heart that was at fault. He left the country a while after this, and I believe that he died abroad.

Mr. James Wright, farmer, of Pickmere, was a local preacher of some fifty years standing. He was a man who was ever true to the cause, and died some years since.

It was in these days that two elderly maiden ladies lived at Budworth. They were known far and wide as "the Miss Beecrofts." They were Methodists, and kept a large boarding-school for young ladies. They had several assistants, one of whom (a Miss Dorrington, a very elegant-looking person) became the wife of Captain Barlow, afore-mentioned. The Miss Beecrofts built a chapel in their own garden, and they managed to secure the services of the Rev. R. Newton (afterwards Dr. Newton), one week-day in every year for about thirty years, and after him came Dr. Hannah, in a similar way, for sixteen years. Old James Littler, an excellent old man, was the leader in my early days, but he has been dead some thirty or forty years. The elder

Miss Beecroft had a class of females. The old ladies died, and the establishment fell into the hands of some nieces, who did not walk in the steps of their aunts, but gave themselves to vanity and pride, and the certain consequence was that they came to grief, and the bare existence of "the Miss Beecrofts of Budworth" is becoming a matter of ancient history.

The old chapel which the Miss Beecrofts built has (some years since) been taken down, and another built upon another site. My friend, Mr. John Clough, of Northwich, is familiar with all the circumstances of which I am now speaking.

When I was young, over fifty years since, old Mr. Hewitt, of Comberbach, was the senior local preacher, and for many years his name stood at the top of the Plan. I ought to have written a short history of my friend, Mr. Thomas Clarke, of Cogshall Hall, who was a good and true friend of the cause in Budworth, Comberbach, and elsewhere. He died only a few years since. There is also Mr. Woodcock, and many others, who deserve honourable mention, but time would fail me.



CHAPTER VI.



HERE is a little field at Lostock Green, which used to be in the holding of a small farmer named Thomas Hindley. I believe that it now belongs to Mr. John Taylor, and adjoins his farmyard. If this little field had a tongue, it could tell a tale of cruelty and of blind barbarity such as is hardly credible in these days.

It is supposed that about two hundred and fifty years since there was a place of worship in this little field, where a few poor Christian people met together from Sabbath to Sabbath to worship God in their own simple fashion. Some of them came miles and miles to this hiding-place. It was their own little sanctuary, which they had reared with their own hands, and where they delighted to meet in Christian fellowship.

These were the days of Charles the Second, who is described as one of the filthiest libertines that ever polluted a throne.

It was in his days that the Conventicle Act was passed, which was intended to extinguish Dissent altogether.

This act forbade more than five persons to meet together for religious worship, except according to

the rites of the Church of England ; every Dissenting minister was liable to a fine of ten pounds, every hearer five pounds, and every tenant of a house where Dissenting meetings were held, was liable to a fine of twenty pounds. In case of a second and third offence these fines were doubled and trebled, and ending with seven years transportation, banishment, and death.

Sheldon was at this time Lord Bishop of London, and according to the practice of those times, he possessed and exercised a vast power in dealing with all matters relating to the Church. His ideas of religious liberty and Christian charity are described in bloody colours in English history.

I am reminded of the unfortunate Caractacus, an early British king, who was taken prisoner by the victorious Romans, and was led in triumph through the streets of Rome. When Caractacus saw the grandeur of the papal city he exclaimed, "I am amazed that a people possessed of such magnificence at home, should envy me a humble cottage in Britain."

So one would have thought that the Lord Bishop of London, robed in lawn and seated in his episcopal palace, might have allowed the poor Nonconformists to follow the religion of their choice, and to worship God in their own little meeting-houses in their own way. But no ! It is said that this Right Reverend

Lord Bishop of London, "let loose all the ruffians of the law on the devoted country."

The houses of Nonconformists were invaded by informers, constables, and all sorts of vile rabble. We are told by our historians that Bishop Sheldon ejected two thousand ministers from their livings, under the Act of Uniformity. These two thousand ministers, with their wives and families, were all turned adrift without house or home; they were all now in the same boat with other Nonconformists. The king's subjects were forbidden to give them food or shelter, and if any of them were found preaching in a field or private house, they were sent at once to prison, and some were sold as slaves to the colonies and sugar plantations.

As if all this were not enough, we are told in Cassell's History of England that at the very next session of parliament, Sheldon, the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of London, procured the "Five Mile Act," which restrained all the ejected ministers from coming within five miles of their parishes under a penalty of forty pounds. This act had the practical effect of shutting up every Nonconformist meeting-house which was within five miles of a market town, and in fact a new crime was created by statute, and all persons offending against the Five Mile Act, were liable to fine and imprisonment.

Meeting-houses everywhere were pulled down, and

the materials sold, and it is said that the great and immortal Sir Christopher Wren, architect of St. Paul's Cathedral, was actually employed in doing this dirty and detestable work, in the view, and with the intent of entirely stamping out Dissent altogether.

Whether the little old meeting-house at Lostock Green was pulled down by Lord Sheldon's ruffians or not, is a matter of uncertainty; it is very possible that the humble worshippers, knowing what was coming, pulled it down themselves. Be this as it may, they came to the conclusion that their meetings would not be lawful unless they were five miles from a town.

When we think of the zeal, the devotion to their cause, the self-sacrifice and indomitable energy of these good people, we may well feel humbled and ashamed.

Tradition tells that they found a piece of land on the border of Holford Moss. This land, which was then a wild waste, is just over five miles by the high road from any market town. It is probable that some of the old materials were carried from Lostock Green to this new site. Be this as it may, yet the fact remains, *mirabile dictu!* that on this remote and desert place they actually built a new and very substantial meeting-house.

How they succeeded in finding time, money, and materials, and how they had the energy, skill, and

perseverance to accomplish such a prodigious work under the undoubted difficulties of the whole business, is a matter of surprise to me. But so it was, and to this remote spot the poor wayworn worshippers, men and women, old and young, were doomed to trudge, along dirty lanes, in all weathers, in order to enjoy the great luxury of Christian fellowship. These people belonged to that immortal band, "of whom the world was not worthy." Their names are not recorded on earth, but they are written in the Book of Life.

This Five Mile Act, when looked at in the light of a clearer day, has a most contemptible appearance, and is very remarkable for blind stupidity, but the vile spirit in which the act was applied is worse (if worse can be) than the act itself.

Sheldon was the great man who was practically clothed with authority to put the law in motion, and it would not be easy to find a man better qualified for the bloody work. He was probably a clever fellow in his way, as bad men sometimes are. He was also a blind bigot, and brimful of spiritual venom.

If I were to employ a great artist to paint me a picture, and if I were to give him as the subject, "Spiritual wickedness in high places," he could not do better than supply me with a full-length life-size portrait of Sheldon, the Lord Bishop of London.

The painter would, of course, take care to show the venom by the dart protruding from his tongue.

Saul of Tarsus, when he was exceeding mad against the Christians, hauling men and women to prison, was nowhere when compared with this arch persecutor.

It turned out that the Five Mile Act had an effect that was not anticipated.

Sheldon did not foresee that it really amounted to a sort of license and liberty for the Nonconformists to build as many chapels as they chose, provided they kept five miles from a town. The consequence of this was that chapels sprang up all over the country in hundreds, and the people were permitted to worship in them, to the great surprise and annoyance of their persecutors, who hoped to stamp out Dissent altogether.

In process of time the act fell into disuse, and was finally repealed, and the hundreds of chapels, which had been built at such a frightful cost in desert and remote places, became for the most part inconvenient and useless, and were converted into houses and other buildings. The one above-mentioned near Holford Moss, was made into a farmhouse, and was the residence of the late Mr. John Ravenscroft, and is known as the Cape farm.

In writing the history of this particular incident, I have to fall back on tradition, and to relate what has been told to me.

These things happened over two hundred years

since, and I never heard of any written record of them, and I hardly need say that I did not see them with my own eyes. If anybody doubts my word, let him go and see the farmhouse above-named, and let the building speak for itself, and it will confirm my story, and to a mind like mine it tells a horrible tale.

I am not ashamed to say that I feel deeply moved when I think of the cruel sufferings of those poor Christians, inflicted upon them by men who were not worthy to loose the latchet of their shoes.

Tradition tells us that there was a burial ground attached to the chapel at Lostock Green. The little field above-mentioned, which I ever regard as "God's acre," was consecrated in those days by the sacred dust of those who knew what it was to suffer for Christ's sake.

Not only was the little meeting-house demolished, but the humble worshippers were practically driven from the spot where their dead were buried, and which to them was hallowed ground.

Many of the gravestones remained to the beginning of this century, but they have been removed, one after another, in order to make room for the plough, and I believe that not one now remains on the ground, but some fragments of the old gravestones are still in existence. I have lately inspected some of these broken fragments at the house of Mrs.

Woolstencroft, Lostock Green, but I failed to find any name or date.

There is another chapel of a similar kind in Allostock. It is just beyond the five-mile limit, and stands on the road leading from Knutsford to Holmes Chapel, on the verge of the great forest of Rudheath, which at that time was a vast wild waste. It happens to have been favoured with a little endowment, and continues as a place of worship to this day.

This chapel has its graveyard, consecrated by the sacred dust of them who were hated of all men for Christ's sake, and many of the gravestones are in a good state of preservation to this day. The persecutors and the persecuted above referred to have long since gone to their account, and no living man can be held answerable for the sin of his predecessors, and yet it is clear that the vile seed which was sown by the parents has been found to be banefully prolific, to the third and fourth generation. Shakespeare lays down the doctrine that the injurer never forgives the injured. This may be hard to be understood, and yet it is a fact that the oppressor cannot forgive the oppressed, nor can the persecutor forgive the persecuted.

Before taking leave of the old chapel in Allostock, I must observe it was endowed by a small estate near Macclesfield, the gift of Rev. Samuel Garside,

son of an ejected minister. He was buried there in May, 1716. The Declaration of Faith of the first church here is as follows, "Wee doe declare to give ourselves to Christ as Lord, and to this ptclar. (particular) church to walk orderly with them in all gospel ordinances." This is signed by sixteen men and seven women. This declaration does them credit, and I hope that they were all found faithful to fulfil it.

In 1725, it is said that the congregation consisted of two hundred and twenty hearers, twenty-eight of whom had votes for the county. About this time a school was established, which was kept by the Rev. S. Eaton, pastor; and we are told that Lord Clive, the great founder of British rule in India, and also General Wolfe the conqueror of Quebec, were both scholars in this school.

The Hollands of Mobberley were of an old Nonconformist family, and belonged to Allostock chapel, and were great supporters. Rev. John Holland was once the pastor. Sir Henry Holland, now Lord Knutsford, is a member of the same family.

It is evident that Lord Sheldon's Five Mile Act did not annihilate the Nonconformists of Cheshire.

In my early days there was an old gentleman living on Lostock Green who was the owner of a freehold house and garden. He was by trade a plane maker, and was reckoned to be skilled in the

manufacture of joiners' tools, sending regular consignments to Manchester and other places. In religion he was a Swedenborgian, and was a devoted follower of Mr. Cowherd, who was a notable man in his day. It is now nearly half a century since old Mr. Clough lost his wife, and he had her interred in a vault at the top of his garden. He himself was laid in the same grave a few years later, followed by his son and grandson, and other members of the family.

When I was a boy, I knew old men who could well remember the time when almost the entire trade of England was carried on by means of packhorses. They usually formed in single file, following each other in long rows. Their masters travelled with their horses, and were the merchantmen of Great Britain down to the last century. They travelled in large companies, and were a sort of convoy to each other. Every man was required to carry his weapon of defence, in order that the entire company might be ready to repel the attacks of gangs of highwaymen who infested the country, and who were the terror of travellers down to the days of our grandfathers. This state of things reminds us of the Midianite merchantmen who, in the days of Joseph, were journeying with their laden camels and going down into Egypt, a distance of some two hundred miles. A similar state of things is seen in Syria to this day:

Great changes have taken place in this country since the time of which I am now speaking. In those days Liverpool was a small town, occupied chiefly by a few fishermen, and was unknown to the world as a seaport of any consequence.

The great metropolis of south Lancashire was the old town of Warrington, this was the centre and terminus; public conveyances were advertised to start from Warrington. It is only a little over a hundred years since, that a new and expeditious service was advertised between Warrington and London; this improved service which was to be put on the road, consisted of what was called "fly wagons," and the proprietor announced that passengers booking by his fly wagons might rely on reaching London within seven days, at the very moderate fare of only five pounds.

This was regarded as an immense improvement upon the old packhorse system, which had served the nation from time immemorial.

Warrington in the last century employed about ten thousand persons in the shoe trade, and exported largely to France, while the merchant-marine trade of Liverpool employed only about a hundred men.

The great London road from Warrington at that time lay by Stretton and Budworth, over Lostock Green and Lach Green for Holmes Chapel; wayside hotels lined the road from end to end. There were

about half-a-dozen hotels in Lostock, and two or three of them were on Lostock Green. The road nearly all the way from Warrington through Cheshire was a substantial pavement, constructed of large boulders. There was a length, however, in Allostock and Cranage of nearly two miles which remained as nature made it—nothing but loose, shifting sand. This length was not constructed with any hard material until about fifty years since, when I saw with my own eyes the first hard material that was brought upon it. The work lasted for more than ten years before it became a good road.

At the time of which I am speaking, the carriage road from Northwich to Lostock Green was along the Manchester road to the Black Greyhound, where it joined the London road above-named.

It was in the year 1831 that I paid my first visit to this place, which from time immemorial had been entirely destitute of any place of religious worship within a distance of several miles, except the Methodist chapel, and probably would have so remained to this day, had it not been for the Methodists.

Since then a church has been built in Lostock. It has often been remarked that if the inhabitants of any neglected village wish for a church, the surest way to get one is to build a chapel. There are

hundreds of villages in England that supply ocular proof of this, and Cheshire alone supplies about one hundred; and not only so, but we have seen in this new-born zeal the fulfilment of Mr. Wesley's prophecy that "Methodism was raised up to reform the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness through the land." There are many other things that the Church has learned from the Methodists, but there are very few church ministers who have the honesty to confess it. They will admit that they have learned the lesson, and yet they disown their teacher.

In many of the cases above referred to, the object of the Church has evidently been not to fight against sin and shame, but to fight against Dissent, which in the eyes of some is the greatest of all sins.

Lostock was another direct offspring from Holford mill. The first Methodist chapel in Lostock was opened on January 26th, 1826. The Rev. R. Newton preached morning and evening, and Rev. James Everitt in the afternoon. My brother Joseph was at the opening services. The cost of the chapel was three hundred pounds; collections on opening day, twenty-five pounds. I knew the ministers pretty well, and have heard both of them. I spent several days in Berlin with Rev. James Everitt in 1857, and I heard him preach in London in 1858; I never saw him afterward. He was a man of marvellous ability, and gave the Conference much trouble in 1849 by his

sarcastic and independent writings. In the year 1832 I got to know all the professors of Methodism in Lostock and its environs. Foremost among these was old Mr. Thomas Millington of Gadbrook, grandfather of the present generation. He was then about seventy-seven years of age, stooped a good deal and walked with a stick, and yet he managed to walk regularly from Gadbrook to Lostock on the Sabbath day, a distance of two miles.

It is worthy of remark that Gadbrook was one of the first places in Cheshire where Methodism obtained an early footing.

I find that in the year 1750, George Kinsey, a young man of about twenty years of age, was living with his parents at Gadbrook, which is simply a farmhouse about three miles from Northwich. George Kinsey had an elder brother, Ralph, who went to hear the first Methodist preachers at Booth Bank (which as a Methodist centre is anterior to Gadbrook). This place, which is near Bucklow Hill, was visited by Mr. Wesley in July, 1748, October, 1749, and again in March, 1753, and it was frequently supplied by Nelson, Walsh, Poole, Shaw and others. It was some time in or about the year 1750, that some of these Methodist preachers were invited to visit Gadbrook. The invitation was accepted, and their message was received into the heart and life of all the family.

Ralph Kinsey, above-named, seems to have been a most excellent and indefatigable young man. It is said that he walked to Frandley, about ten miles, every week to lead his class.

Mr. Wesley himself is reported to have visited Gadbrook on two different occasions, but I have not at present been able to fix the dates of these visits.

Mr. George Kinsey, who was quite a young man when he was converted, lived to the age of about ninety-eight years, and was ever true to his profession. His life and death are given in the Magazine for 1830.

Mr. Thomas Millington, of whom I am now speaking, was born at Shurlach, near Broken Cross, and was early in the Methodist field. He married the daughter of Mr. George Kinsey, and succeeded his father-in-law at the Gadbrook farm, where he lived when first I knew him, and where he died in 1838, aged eighty-three years. He bequeathed to his children the legacy of a good name as a man and a Christian. He had been a member of Society since 1780, and a class leader since 1795.

Mr. George Millington of Henbury (grandson of the above) is in possession of the "family tree," which is very explanatory of the family branches. Mr. Thomas Millington had three sons; I knew them all well. The eldest, Joseph, was for many years

a class leader, trustee, and steward, and was a very reliable man. He died as a bachelor in 1850, aged fifty-two. His younger brother James was for some years a devoted class leader. He also died a bachelor in 1846, aged forty-three. The other brother, Thomas, lived on a neighbouring farm till after the death of his brother Joseph, when he removed to the old house at home. He maintained an unbroken connection with the Methodist Church all his days. A few years before his death he retired to Weaverham, where he died in 1875, aged seventy-five years. His son Thomas now lives at Gadbrook, but it is too soon to write his history.

The following statement may interest my readers, and will show the strength of Methodism in these parts, in the middle of the last century.

We are told that the old farmhouse at Booth Bank was licensed for preaching long before any Methodist chapel was built in Manchester. It was verily the living and loving centre of the Methodists in Cheshire and Lancashire. Mr. Wesley, on his first visit, in May, 1747, simply speaks of them as "a quiet and loving people."

One of the first circuit or quarterly meetings that I read of, was held on April 20th, 1752, at the house of John and Alice Cross, of Booth Bank, near Bucklow Hill. The stewards attended and paid in their moneys, which were as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Chester, by Jonathan Pritchard ...	0	12	0
Alpraham	0	12	0
Acton	0	7	0
Booth Bank	0	10	11
Oldfield Brow	0	8	0
Davy-Hulme	0	15	0
Shakerley	0	4	0
Bolton, by George Eskrick	0	8	2
Bank House	0	8	0
Astbury	0	5	6
Manchester, by Richard Barlow ...	2	3	5
Gadbrook, by Mary Webster ...	0	6	0
	£7	0	0

It will be seen that (with the exception of Chester), there is not a single circuit town in Cheshire in the above list, and yet the old farmhouse of Gadbrook is among the honoured few, and it is said that a society was formed here some years before this date.

This quarterly meeting is supposed to have been the very first that was ever held in the annals of Methodism, and the report of it gives us a vivid idea of the meaning of that passage, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation."

Now that I have taken my readers to Booth Bank, I will give them the history of a remarkable woman who lived there. Her name was Alice Cross, and she was the wife of John Cross, a farmer. She was a strong, rough, uncultivated and indomitable woman.

It seems that in or about the year 1747, she heard one of the early and faithful Methodist preachers. A more unlikely subject of divine grace was never known, and yet, strange as it may appear, this rude and violent woman was brought to the foot of the cross and found pardon. Her conversion created a great sensation in all the neighbourhood; and the common talk from Altrincham to Bucklow Hill, and in fact for miles round, was that she had gone stark mad. Her husband was a tame, ignorant fellow, perfectly in the dark as to spiritual things, and to all appearance was a very hopeless subject; yet, entirely undaunted, she assailed him in an irresistible manner. She said, "Now John Cross, wilt thou go to heaven with me? for I am determined not to go to hell with thee." Her force of character and purity of purpose were superior to all opposition, and he yielded to the power of truth, and became not only a new creature in Christ, but he became also a man of great force and ability.

The renovation of these two characters was infinitely beyond the power of any school or college, or of any human institution whatever, and forcibly reminds me of the very appropriate lines:—

"A wonderful fashion of teaching He hath,
And wise to salvation He makes us through faith."

They now made their largest room into a place of worship, and fitted it with a pulpit and all require-

ments, and, verily, they had a "church in their own house," and here the gospel in its native simplicity was preached for many long years. This place was, in fact, the centre and rallying-point of the great religious movement. It stood connected with Little Leigh, Astbury, Alpraham, and Gadbrook, places which, though ten to twenty miles apart, were bound together in the bonds of Christian love, and were almost the only places in Cheshire where Methodism found an early footing.

Alice Cross was a character—a great champion for the truth. She was appointed class leader, and became an able and energetic speaker, and for many years devoted herself to good work, visiting the sick and dying. She died in 1774, aged sixty-five years, and left behind her, as a sort of heirloom, the old bootjack made by John Nelson, besides some relics and inscriptions which, within a few years past, might be seen carefully preserved in what was called the "Prophet's Chamber," at Booth Bank. The names of several brave men, inscribed on glass, were well preserved a while since.

I could write a history, if necessary, of Alice Cross and her indefatigable and successful labours, but I must forbear. If her like was multiplied by thousands it would be a great blessing to these lands.

I must now go back to Lostock. At the time of which I am speaking (1831) I found old Randle

Burrows one of the principal men. He was a wheelwright, living at the Black Greyhound, and was one of the hardest workers in the Lostock society. If men are saved by their works, there is no doubt of him. He was a strong partisan. He did not believe that there was any good in the world outside of Methodism. He was the leader of two classes, and he visited nearly all the people about the place, and when he had succeeded in getting their names in his class book he rejoiced over them just as if they had been truly converted.

In my opinion he always stopped short of the real thing, and never pressed upon his members the vital necessity of a new heart and a new life. The consequence was that his members, never having tasted the luxury of Christian love, soon became tired of the dry profession, and one by one their names disappeared from poor old Randle's class book. He worked hard all his days, but his labour was mostly lost. Nearly half the men and women of Lostock had at one time or other been in his class, but they had fallen away, and were reckoned backsliders, whereas as a fact they had never "tasted of the good Word of God," and (with few exceptions) had never been truly converted.

In my opinion many of his cast-off members were none the better, but rather worse, for their formal and worthless experiences. He passed away finally under

a cloud, in May, 1844, but I hope that he died as a Christian. I give him credit for being a good man, and yet he never appeared in my eye to understand the true secret of spiritual life.

At the time of which I am speaking Birch Hall was reckoned a preacher's house. Mr. Jackson, the tenant, was a very creditable sort of man, and yet not very decided. His wife was the sister of Mr. Dodson, of Holford. They removed, in or about the year 1837, to Pickmere, where they both died, leaving one daughter.

The Kinseys (three brothers), Thomas, who lived in the Fields, William, who lived at Over Street, and John, who lived at Wincham Wharf, all belonged to Lostock. Thomas had married the daughter of Mr. Millington, of Gadbrook. John, the youngest of the three, married the daughter of Mr. John Wood, who was then a farmer in Penny's Lane, and was the eldest son of Mr. John Wood, of Holmes Chapel. Mr. John Kinsey was for many years a local preacher. These three brothers, with their connections, gave strength to the cause at Lostock. They are all dead many years since, but their names still live.

Mr. John Kinsey's only child is now the wife of Mr. James Hesketh. Her mother still survives.

Time would fail me to speak of more than a small fraction of the people that I knew very well—many of them deserve to be remembered, but my space forbids.

I must not, however, omit the name of Mr. Robert Wrench, who for many years of his life lived at Wincham View, and had a very extensive business connection. I have now before me his old family Bible, bearing the names "Robert and Ann Wrench, 1825." This Bible contains the family register for thirty years, and is in Mr. Wrench's own handwriting. It was in or about the year 1833, as nearly as I can remember, that both he and his wife joined the Methodist Church at Lostock, and were examples of piety and devotion to the cause. They had a number of children, but they are all dead long since, except Mrs. Harrison, of Chester. Mr. Wrench was a man of gentlemanly bearing, and was a local preacher for twenty-five years. He died in 1860.



CHAPTER VII.



E have already seen that Mr. Dodson had removed to his farm in Plumbley, which Mr. Peter Stubbs subsequently occupied for many years to the time of his death, and Mr. William Dodson with his young wife was now at the mill, where he carried on the business. The cause which had been so successfully carried on at Holford mill for some ten years, was now branching itself; one contingent found refuge in their own sanctuary at Pickmere, as we have seen, and another contingent, as I have already stated, had their own place at Lostock; and now, in the year 1827, the remnant found a resting place in the new chapel at Plumbley, which Mr. Dodson had reared at his own expense, and which, *mirabile dictu*, was opened and dedicated without a collection.

The opening services were conducted by Mr. Peter Picton, a local preacher of Norley. It was in the autumn of 1831, that I went to Plumbley chapel for the first time, and it was not very long after this, as already stated, that I heard Captain Barlow preach the funeral sermon of young James Dodson. I went now and again, till 1833, when on one occasion,

there being no preacher, Mr. Dodson asked me to speak to the people. I don't know who the defaulting preacher might be, but I am sure that I was a very poor substitute.

Mr. Dodson and his excellent second wife were rarely or never absent from the services. They were, to a great extent, the life and soul of the place. Their house was always open to the preachers and other Christian friends, and they were ready for every good word and work, and nothing that they could do was too much for the preachers, many of whom had to walk long journeys after the evening service.

Mr. Dodson had a very thoughtful and generous habit on going to chapel on a Sunday evening. He quietly put a flask of gin and a biscuit in his pocket, and when the preacher came down from the pulpit, and the congregation were gone, he invited the preacher into his pew, and to sit down, when he quietly took the flask and the biscuit from his pocket, and, without saying a word, set these things with his own hand before the preacher, and when he had eaten and drunk they both blessed him with an affectionate "good night." The anxious thought, and the assiduous and tender care, which for many long years he evinced, will never be fully known till that day when it will be proclaimed—"Inasmuch as thou hast done to these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me."

My very earnest and excellent temperance friends must bear in mind, that in these days we had never heard of temperance societies or total abstinence. Drunkenness was always one of the worst enemies of the Christian Church—thousands upon thousands of well-meaning men have been slain by this one enemy—thousands upon thousands of Church members have been cast off from Christian fellowship in consequence of a weakness for drink, and in very many cases have been utterly abandoned and lost. Nobody seems to have thought of any drastic remedy for all this wreckage and destruction. The bloody beast was permitted to roam through all our towns and villages dealing havoc and death, and slaying in thousands men, women and children, and yet, strange to say, nobody thought of destroying the wild beast. The moderate and temperate use (so called) of beer was always supposed to be perfectly proper and justifiable, and the only remedy proposed was self-restraint. Such was the state of things at this time.

Mr. Wesley had a fertile brain, and a penetrating eye, and in these respects was second to very few men. He had also an immense experience of men and things, and nothing was beneath his notice, and yet it does not appear that he ever thought of “total prohibition,” as a question of national importance. His “Rules,” which are regarded as the moral and

Christian code of the Methodist societies forbid the "selling" of "*spirituous liquors*," or "drinking" them except in cases of extreme necessity, and yet they make no allusion to the drinking of beer. It is well known that in his day many of the members and officers of the Methodist societies were in "the trade," and in my own day I can well remember leaders and local preachers being "licensed to sell beer."

If Mr. Wesley had lived in our day, and had seen, as we see, the curse and havoc in our midst, I have no doubt that he would have been conspicuous among the best and leading spirits of our land, whose unanimous verdict is that "the only remedy is to slay the dragon." Mr. William Dodson and his excellent young wife belonged to the place, and were constant in their attendance, except when he had his other engagements. He had his own private business to attend to. He was local preacher and leader, and was also trustee for several chapels, and a society and chapel steward. It is now fifty-five years since, when once, at the quarterly meeting, there was a complaint that some of the poor local preachers, when on their sabbath work, had been overlooked and forgotten, and no friend had taken them to dinner or tea. It was said that the "respectable" preachers found plenty of friends, while the poor were neglected. Mr. Dodson stood up and

administered a very seasonable and Christian admonition, and hoped that such a thing would never occur again, and he added, "Whoever else you may or may not take to your houses, I beseech you all that you will never forget or neglect my poor brethren." To this day I regard it as a privilege and an honour to have been (in my young days) the personal friend of Mr. William Dodson.

It was in the year 1827 that I first knew anything of Bradshaw Brook. Mr. Thomas Dutton (as we have seen), lived there at that time. He had formerly been Mr. Dodson's working corn-miller. He was now his tenant on a small farm, and lived in an old thatched farmhouse very near the spot where the chapel now stands. Mr. Dutton was an acceptable local preacher, and on one or two occasions, he was got to preach and assist in the great revival services in Cranage and Holmes Chapel in the year above-named. He left Bradshaw Brook within a year or two after this, and was succeeded on the little farm by an industrious farmer named John Harrop.

There had been preaching services at the house during Mr. Dutton's tenancy, and these were continued by his successor. The preaching service was in the afternoon only, and occasionally I attended, till the year 1834. Mr. Harrop was overseer of Allstock for a time. His wife was a woman of colour. They removed to Davenham, where they resided for many

years before they died. Their son John after a long time, became the tenant of the Bridge Foot farm, Davenham. He was a member of the Methodist Free Church, and was very zealous and earnest as a Christian, and died rather suddenly a few years since.

I have already noticed that Mr. Dodson removed from Plumbley to Bradshaw Brook in 1834. He pulled down the old thatched house above-named, and built a new house and farm premises, and he also made, in the building adjoining the house, a room for religious services, which was regularly used as a sort of chapel for more than twenty years. He died in April, 1837, leaving a widow and young daughter. Mrs. Dodson was verily a widow indeed all her days, and died at the same place in May, 1856, leaving her only child as the wife of Mr. William Hesketh.

I must not omit to say that Mr. William Bailey, a plain farmer who lived in the Back Lane, Peover, was class leader at Bradshaw Brook for many years after Mr. Dodson's death. I visited him on his death-bed many years since.

The present new chapel at Bradshaw Brook was built in 1858. It stands almost upon the identical ground where the old farmhouse stood, and where the ark rested (of my own knowledge) more than sixty years since. I remember, in the year 1831, I was present there at an open-air service, and

was much impressed by the unexpected prayer of Mr. Thomas Robinson, a respectable farmer of Over Peover, and grandfather of the present Mrs. William Groves, of Brookfield, Little Peover. Little did he think that the prayer which he offered on that day in the open air, and on the ground where the new chapel now stands, would be remembered more than fifty years after he had gone to his account. His life and death are written in the Methodist Magazine. He was connected with the Knutsford society, and died at the age of sixty-eight.

I have not space to give even the names of a tenth part of the devoted men and women that I have known in these parts. Mr. William Caldwell, of the Crown farm, Peover (formerly of Shurlach) was a man of culture and gentlemanly bearing. He was for many years an acceptable local preacher, and was connected with this place. I had business transactions with him for some years, and visited him on his deathbed. He died much esteemed, more than thirty years since. One of his daughters (long since deceased), became the excellent wife of Mr. William Groves; the others survive.

In these days Mr. Charles Higginson was one of the class leaders; Mr. James Clegg, lately deceased, was another; and among the devoted friends of the cause were Mr. W. Hesketh, now of Lostock, and his excellent wife; Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, who had

succeeded Mr. Hesketh; Mr. and Mrs. Venables, of Bradshaw Brook, and very many others who deserve mention, but as they for the most part still survive, their biography cannot yet be written.

It was in these days (1866,) that we were visited with that terrible scourge, the cattle plague. The visitation was most distressing and positively heart-breaking. Mr. Venables above-named lost a large stock of dairy cows, one of the worst and poorest only escaping. Mr. Joseph Brocklehurst, of Hulme Hall, had died two or three years before, leaving a young family hardly through their teens. Some scores of their dairy cattle fell by this mortal disease. I was then living at Sculshaw Lodge, and went to Hulme Hall once or twice every day while the plague raged, and I felt the deepest sympathy for these orphan children, who had lost both father and mother.

Mr. John Ravenscroft of the Cape farm suffered sadly, nearly the whole of his valuable stock was swept away.

I was a sort of local inspector, and drove round the country from day to day, and did all in my power to lighten the trouble and to lessen the calamity, but all in vain; veterinary surgeons were as ignorant and as helpless as other people.

I remember one sad Sabbath in particular. The bells were ringing and the rain was falling incessantly.

I had men working in the rain all Sunday enlarging the huge grave. The cows were dying, and the horses were at work dragging them to their grave one after another, and we buried about twenty in one vast grave, covering their bodies with quicklime, and this on a dark, gloomy, rainy Sabbath day, in the month of February, 1866. It was painful to me and to my dear wife, to stand helplessly and to witness the agony and death of many excellent and beautiful beasts that we had literally loved and admired. But there was no help for it.

There are times in one's history when it is very hard to say, "The will of the Lord be done," and I must confess that this was a great trial, not to me only, but to very many of my dear relations and friends. My brother at Woodford Hall, and my brother-in-law at Wrenbury, were among the greatest sufferers, and in fact, very few farmers escaped. The loss by the rinderpest in Cheshire was far worse than in other counties, and in fact, was about one-third of the entire loss of the whole kingdom.

I may in the course of my writing, refer again to this subject as occasion may offer, but it is not my intention to write further at length. Those of my readers who may wish to be more fully informed should procure the history of the scourge, which was published at the time by my excellent and intelligent friend, Mr. Thomas Rigby, of Sutton Weaver.

I do not suppose that there is a man living who has such long and local knowledge of Allostock, Peover, and surrounding parishes, as myself. I knew the going out and coming in of almost everybody. I have of course known of many things that are better forgotten than remembered. I have known scores of men (otherwise respectable) ruined by intemperance and other sins. I say "other sins," for drunkenness is a sin that never stands alone. I have known probably hundreds of such, in the breadth of my acquaintance, whose lives have been worse than wasted, and whose names so far as I am concerned shall perish. Behold it is written in the sixty-ninth Psalm, "Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written with the righteous."

Before taking my leave of this locality there is one man above all others that I must not forget. He was one of the Bradshaw Brook band for the greater part of his life, and well and nobly did he act his part and do his duty. I refer to Mr. William Carter. His father was of the same name, and when I was young lived at the Sculshaw Green farm, and farmed the corn tithe in kind, and collected it over the entire township, before the days of the Tithe Commutation Act. His son William, when scarcely beyond his teens, became deeply and devoutly concerned about things spiritual and divine. Many of

the incidents relating to his conviction for sin and conversion are of the most startling and extraordinary nature. I became more intimately acquainted with him when he came to live at the Millgate farm. This is now probably thirty-five years since, and we lived as very near neighbours for some years.

His young wife (now his widow) was sister to Mrs. Venables afore-mentioned, long since deceased, and they were both sisters to Mr. John Hill, of West Heath, Congleton, who for many years was agent to Sir Charles Shakerley, and was also a man of sterling worth among the Methodists of Congleton. He died in the autumn of 1877. I attended his funeral at Astbury, and we all felt that a good man had fallen. Mr. Carter and Mr. Hill were brothers-in-law, and I never expect to meet with better or truer men.

In the case of some men their very calling and vocation oblige them to observe a sort of sanctified propriety, and to adopt a sort of religious exterior, but this does not apply to men who have to do daily battle with the world in all its multifarious and vexatious forms.

My dear friend, Mr. Carter, in addition to his moral excellence, was well educated, and had a clear head and a sound judgment, and had much experience, and not only had he his farm on his hands, but he had a good deal to do with the world, and with men and things. He was a trusted friend

and a safe counsellor, and was also one of the executors in charge of the orphan children of his decased brother-in-law at Hulme Hall. He finally succeeded Mr. Hesketh as occupier of the Brookhouse farm on the London road, where he spent some years of his valuable life, and where he died only a little beyond his prime a year or two since.

Finally, I will say, that to the best of my belief, take him for all in all, he was one of the best and most spiritually-minded men that I ever knew. I had business transactions with him for many years, and saw his going out and coming in every day, and was a constant witness of his public and private life, and have no hesitation in saying that "I never expect to look upon his like again." I must now proceed to other matters.



CHAPTER VIII.



NORTHWICH is a market town of considerable importance. It is situate in the centre of Cheshire. It has a population, including the suburbs, of about fifteen thousand, and if we include the population within two miles, there are probably over twenty thousand persons. Northwich is a sort of inland seaport, and is situate on the banks of the river Weaver, which is navigable from Winsford, five miles higher up the river, down to Weston Point, below Runcorn, where the Weaver will join the Ship Canal, now in course of construction. Northwich may be regarded as the centre of the great salt district, and the entire production of the district is said to approach two million tons per annum, a large portion of which is carried down the river on the way to Liverpool, mostly for exportation.

There is good reason to suppose that as early as the year 1640, there were some Puritans in Northwich. In those days magistrates possessed a good deal of local authority, and sometimes they even made their own laws. They issued a proclamation about this time, in the form of a precept, in which they emphatically "forbid and prohibit all

religious meetings in any place whatever, except in the public parish church." These were the days of Charles the First, and previous to the time of Oliver Cromwell. If there had been no Dissenters (who were then called Puritans), the above proclamation would have been superfluous and without meaning. This recorded proclamation, as it seems to me, shows not only that Dissenters then existed in Northwich, but it also shows that they were hunted down and persecuted by the men who were then in power.

Our friends the Congregationalists very modestly profess to have been established since the year 1700, whereas it seems that they might truly have gone back to an earlier date. It does not, however, appear that they had any chapel till about the year 1720; possibly they were not able to build one, and it is also very possible that the law did not then allow it. For many years they continued to be few and feeble, and in the year 1760 they were without a minister, and discontinued their regular services, and for some years they let their chapel to the Methodists at a rent of six pounds a year, and it is said that Wesley himself has on several occasions preached in the little old Congregational chapel which then existed in Crown Street, which Mr. Wesley in his journal calls "a little room that would hold about forty people."

In the year 1766 the Congregationalists had resumed possession of their little chapel, and held their regular Sabbath services, and Mr. Green, a Mr. Davies, and a Mr. Jarvis, were the successive ministers till the year 1795, when a better day began to dawn. It was in this year that a young man fresh from college visited many places in Cheshire, and at length decided to make Northwich his home. This young man was despised and rejected of many. He was shunned by the "respectables," who would not even speak to him in the street. The little church was so poor that for twelve long years they did not raise over twenty pounds a year for all purposes, and yet he was steady to his purpose, poor and despised. He not only took the services in Northwich, but every Sabbath for many years he went to Middlewich to aid the young cause there. This young man was no other than the Rev. Job Wilson, of blessed memory.

In less than ten years the church had become stronger, and the little old chapel was made into a new one capable of holding nearly three hundred persons, and was opened in September, 1806. It was at these opening services, which were felt by all to be a most hopeful and auspicious occasion, that the first step was taken in the formation of a county union. In process of time Job Wilson became a sort of "county patriarch." We find that for many

long years he gave his weekday services to other churches. He was often at Knutsford, Tattenhall, Over, Sandbach, Leek, Lawton, and many other places, and it may truly be said that the Independents of this day have a thousand reasons to remember the indomitable perseverance of the Rev. Job Wilson, whose name will long live among his people in Cheshire. I knew him well, and yet I did not then know his sterling worth. He died in the year 1838, on the very day when our beloved Queen was crowned. He was buried in his own little chapel, amid many tears. Even the local clergymen and many tradesmen of the town attended his funeral. His remains were afterwards removed to the new chapel at the foot of Winnington Hill, and subsequently to the last new chapel in Castle, where he awaits his third resurrection.

The successors of the Rev. Job Wilson have successively been the Rev. W. Lamb, Rev. John Harrison, Rev. D. G. Watt, Rev. James Johns and Rev. F. Carter. If the Independents from the beginning had been possessed of a fruitful field for the spiritual culture and mental training of a body of lay preachers, and if they had been more aggressive in spirit, they might to-day have been found in most of our villages throughout the country. In this respect the different Methodist churches are the first in the field.

It is due, however, and I take this opportunity of saying that the Puritans, the Baptists, the Independents, the Society of Friends, and others were fighting the battle of civil and religious liberty before the world had ever heard of Wesley or of Methodism. They were in prison in hundreds and thousands before Wesley was born. Many of them had been ejected from their livings for conscience sake, their goods and effects confiscated, and they were made to feel the full force of dominant vengeance, and in countless numbers perished in prison, or were banished, or suffered death.

At this time the English Church for the most part was in a most wretched state, both mentally, morally and spiritually, and was totally unable and unfitted to supply one morsel of spiritual food to the famishing multitudes. There were some exceptions, but they were few and far between.

It is highly probable (humanly speaking) that, had it not been for the Nonconformist element of those days, and had it not been for the grit and the grace of these men, we should never have seen civil and religious liberty in this country. It is very likely that to-day we should have had a Catholic sovereign upon the throne; that we should have been under the dominion of the Pope, and should have been a nation of Papists. All honour to the men who bore the brunt of the battle before we were born.

Their successors of whatever name have no need to be ashamed of their history.

The early days of Methodism were troublous times. Some of the most excellent men in the land were not only pelted with mud, cursed and abused, but they were frequently dragged and haled about hither and thither by mad constables, hounded on by malicious informers, and were often brought before blind and bigoted justices, and other officials, and were ruthlessly pushed into prison without regard to either sense or justice, and were made the scoff and the victims of a herd of vile officials who were not worthy to loose the latchet of their shoes.

There was, however, one very convenient form of persecution ready to hand in those days; there was an Act of Parliament which gave power to take by force any men who were of disorderly habits, and the constables and others were in the daily habit of bringing all such persons before the appointed commissioner, who generally made short work of such cases by committing them for service in the army.

It was a very easy thing for vile and wicked fellows, full of blind bigotry, and inflated with devilish zeal, to lay information against the early Methodist preachers, and to say and swear that they were disorderly men, going about the country creating commotion among the people, and turning the world upside down. It is not possible for me

to report one in a hundred of the horrible cruelties that were of daily occurrence in those days.

There was a good and devoted man named Thomas Beard, an earnest co-worker with Wesley, he was taken by force from his lawful trade, and from his wife and children, and sent away as a soldier. Banished from all that was dear to him, and compelled to dwell among infamous wretches for no other crime, either real or pretended, than that of calling sinners to repentance. He was taken to Newcastle-on-Tyne, where he sank beneath the load of his hardships, crushed in body and mind. No mortal hand was stretched out to save him, when his God came to the rescue, signed his discharge, and called him home. A company of the heavenly host came out to meet him before the golden gate, and sang in angelic triumph, "Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought the better fight." Verily "He shall look on them that have no helper, and precious shall their blood be in His sight."

Hideous things were done in those times; the best of lives were sacrificed, and the purest blood of the best men was spilt like water. The wonder is (as Uncle Tom would say) that God would let such vile things to happen.

The case of John Nelson will never be forgotten. He was a working man, and had to earn his living

by his own hard labour, but God had troubled his heart, and he became one of the most devoted and faithful men that ever lived. He travelled on foot thousands of miles without one shilling of reward, doing all that any one man could do to turn sinners from the error of their ways. It was very easy for the devil's diligent servants to find occasion against him. He was notorious in their eyes. Informers, instigated by the devil, were greedy as vultures on a dead carcase. Information was laid against him that he was a Methodist preacher, and he was taken before the Reverend Mr. Coleby, vicar of Birstal, who was a Halifax commissioner. It is sometimes said that these professed successors of the Apostles, whose function it is to preach mercy, are nevertheless the most merciless of men. Justice Coleby seems to have been of this feather. No sort of evidence was of any avail before this clerical autocrat. Poor John Nelson, whose heart was overflowing with divine love, was condemned at once as "a rogue and a vagabond," and was sent for a soldier, and not only so, but was stigmatised with a remark from this reverend divine—"Take him away, it is time to be rid of such fellows."

The next day he appeared in the streets in his red coat, and was doomed to eat, drink, and sleep with the dissolute herd, while his wife and children were left to starve or shift for themselves

as best they could. We are indebted for these facts to the historians of the time, and to Nelson's own journal, confirmed in Mr. Wesley's own handwriting.

One day after this, while Nelson was on parade with his regiment in the streets of Leeds, a wicked woman came and jeered and mocked him, saying, "Now Nelson, where is thy God?" He told her to go and look in Micah, chapter vii., verses 9, 10, where it is written "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me; then *she* that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: she shall be trodden down as the mire of the streets." What a scathing answer to this daughter of Belial! One would suppose that it would settle her for life.

We who in these days have heard so much, and have been taught so many lessons on the subject of civil and religious liberty, can scarcely conceive what blind bigotry existed in the last century. Some of the mayors and justices seem to have been fully as blind as the common people. Take the following official notice as a sample, which was agreed upon at Petty Sessions, signed by two magistrates, and was issued, proclaimed and made public in Staffordshire, and on the border of Cheshire:

" To all High-Constables, Petty Constables and others of His Majesty's Peace Officers within the said County :

" WHEREAS, we His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said County of Stafford, have received information that several disorderly persons styling themselves Methodist Preachers go about raising 'Routs' and Riots, to the great damage of His Majesty's liege people, and against the Peace of our Sovereign Lord the King : These are in His Majesty's name to command you and every one of you within your respective Districts to make diligent search after the said Methodist Preachers, and to bring him or them before some of us his said Majesty's Justices of the Peace to be examined concerning their unlawful doings.

" Given under our Hands and Seals this day of
October, 1743.

Signed, J. LANE, } Justices of the Peace."
 W. PERSEHOUSE, }

In these days of religious enlightenment it is hardly possible to realise the darkness and ignorance that prevailed in the days of our grandfathers on religious subjects, and it is almost shocking to be told that very many clergymen of good social standing, and of reputed education, were so exasperated to see their parishes invaded by these religious fanatics, and so ignorant were they of the true light and life of divine truth that they were frequently found to be among the foremost and most virulent persecutors.

It is somewhat painful to reproduce the history of those events, but truth is truth, and fidelity to truth is a virtue. When I speak of the blind barbarity of the last century, I do so with the object of placing it in contrast with the light and liberty

of our own day. We deplore the shame and sin of our grandfathers in this matter, and are thankful to heaven that we have been taught better things. The clergy of this day are in no way answerable for former generations. Since then we have learned to think and let think, and we have made great advances in the cultivation of Christian charity, and are ashamed of the old barbarous and stupid practices of religious persecution. If there be any men among us who are still in a state of hopeless blindness on these matters, let them bid us adieu, and let them seek a home in a more congenial climate.

The county of Chester earned a sad notoriety in the last century. The people were very low down, both mentally and morally, and often acted like wild beasts. Scarcely one single church had been built in Cheshire for many generations. There was no such thing as a Sunday school, and not one person in ten was ever taught to read.

These were the days referred to by our late Bishop of Chester, reported in the public papers in July, 1887. The bishop is evidently of opinion that the darkness and depravity which were prevalent at that time, were not so much the fault of the people, as of those blind leaders of the blind, who must be held responsible for the ignorance that prevailed. His lordship after speaking of the prevalent Nonconformity in Wales, goes on to say, "I do not excuse what

shortcomings there have been and are among ourselves, we ought to have been more energetic, and more wide awake than we are." These words of the bishop are awfully true. There is no doubt that if the Church of England had been more wide awake at the beginning of the last century, and if she had then only known the day of her visitation, she might have filled the land with all the blessings of true Christianity. She had a golden opportunity. She was in undisputed possession of the field, which was then white unto harvest, and to use the words of the bishop, if the Church had only been "more wide awake" there would have been no Methodist churches in our land. The truth is that the Church of England was asleep, and God raised up other churches to cultivate the vast spiritual waste which had been so long and so culpably neglected.

We sometimes talk of the dark ages, but it is hardly possible to conceive of any age much darker than the last century. It was like the darkness before the dawn. It was verily the fag end of the dark ages. Northwich seems to have got its full share of this pestiferous wave of moral and mental night. It is true there was the old Witton church, but I do not hear or read of a single ray of religious light emanating from the place, which ought to have been the centre and source of spiritual life. It is also true that the Congregationalists had existed in the

town ever since the year 1700, but they had not yet recovered the generations of persecution which they had endured, and they existed almost on sufferance, and were incapable of any aggression.

This was the state of things when John Wesley paid his first visit to Northwich. It was in the first week in May, 1747, that we find him at Todmorden, Rossendale and Manchester, he then comes on to Davy-Hulme, Oldfield Brow and Booth Bank, and on Saturday, May 9th, about noon, he reaches Mr. Anderton's, near Northwich, where he opened his commission. There were some rough persons present, and he tells us that "several of the gay and rich were there." It is likely enough that he had some gay persons to hear him, but it is not likely that many of them were very rich, as rich men are estimated in these days. He remained there till between two and three o'clock, and then proceeded through Holmes Chapel to Astbury, near Congleton, the same afternoon, where there was one of the earliest Methodist churches.

It does not appear that Mr. Wesley visited Northwich for many years after this, and it was many years before Methodist preaching was regularly established in the town itself. There were many places in the country where the early Methodists were very roughly handled, but in this respect Northwich seems to have distinguished itself. The perse-

cution here was of the most vile and brutal kind. It was a common thing for the preachers to be dragged down the street by the hair of the head. On one occasion, Mr. John Morris, one of the preachers, narrowly escaped being thrown over the town bridge into the river. The mob was encouraged in this savage and inhuman work by two young fops of the names of Barrow and Jeffries. The practice of throwing mud, dirt and rotten eggs was deemed to be altogether insufficient, and something more adequate to the occasion was required.

Some of my readers will know that we have in the town what is called "The Cut," of modern notoriety, now arched over. This cut is the boundary line between Northwich and Witton, and we have it on good historic evidence that this cut in the middle of the last century was called "a filthy quagmire," and we are told that the early Methodist preachers were often plunged, or as some said were "baptised" in the filthy cut. One of the first Methodists in Northwich was a Mr. Isaac Barnes, a seedsman, and a tradesman of the town, and one whose position ought to have commanded a little respect, and yet he fared no better than others. We are told that he was *often* rolled in the foul cut. It was very congenial employment, and indeed it was rare fun for the brave cowards of Northwich to persecute these unoffending people, and in some instances to abuse them in the

most cruel and detestable fashion. Little did these savage ruffians think that their victims were men "the latchet of whose shoes they were not worthy to unloose."

Mr. Barnes' wife was a daughter of Mr. Ralph Kinsey, of Gadbrook, who on one occasion led Mr. Wesley's horse over the town bridge, and did his best to protect him from the violence of the mob. He was then in the prime of life, and "feared God above many." He afterwards removed to Little Leigh and Warrington, and became on the mother's side the father of the Hesketh family, and grandfather of the present Heskeths of Lostock. The younger brother George, as we have already seen, remained at Gadbrook.

A Mr. Moses Dale was one of the early Christians. He was merely a working man; he was, nevertheless, a leader and local preacher, and is spoken of as a son of thunder, and an earnest, honest man. Once a year he made a tour through Derbyshire and Shropshire on foot on his errand of mercy, and on one occasion we are told that he preached in the Vicarage of Madeley with his hands on the shoulders of the memorable Fletcher, the dear and lifelong friend and brother of John Wesley. This poor man was once taken round the town on what was called "a butcher's block," as if they intended him for execution, and the rabble of the town surrounded

him in the bull ring with their music of tin cans and cows' horns, until he was deafened with the noise and hubbub. He escaped, however, unhurt.

Paul the apostle tells us that he had fought with beasts at Ephesus, and verily the early Methodists may truly have said that they had fought with beasts at Northwich.

One of the wonders of the world for indomitable energy and zeal, was John Nelson, whose name I have above mentioned. Very few men did more and suffered more for Christ's sake than he did. He was in Cheshire in or about the years 1742 and 1744, and visited Booth Bank, Alpraham, and other places, and it is worthy of note, that when he visited this county, the cattle plague was raging everywhere, and dead cattle were lying in the fields in all directions, and it is entirely inexplicable that after one hundred and twenty years we had another similar visitation.

Jonah's gourd sprang up in a night, and perished in a night, and the cattle plague on both these occasions came without any known cause, and went away when its work was done, and no man could tell "whence it cometh, or whither it goeth."

Whether John Nelson was ever introduced to the devil's own children at Northwich is not certain, but we know that Bennett, Shaw, Walsh, Poole, and many others, had the pleasure of their acquaintance. Should any of my readers wish for further particulars

of the persecution which raged in Northwich for years, I must refer them to the Methodist Magazine for the years 1795, 1830, and 1843, where they will find that I have good foundation for all that I say. I may, however, remark, that among other forms of persecution, they resorted to the practice of boycotting, and this practice was carried on for years in almost every conceivable form, and every attempt was made to starve and ruin the members of the infant cause.

We have already seen that Mr. Wesley visited Northwich in May, 1747, and I do not find that he was ever in the town again for nearly fifteen years. He, however, was kept fully informed of the vile and lawless persecution which had raged during all this time.

It is said that on Monday, August 2nd, 1762, he was in Chester, and on the following day he rode over to Northwich, and preached in a little room (the old Congregational chapel) that would hold only fifty people. We are told as a matter of course, that "there was a mob as usual." At that time it was a remarkable thing for any Methodist preacher to come and go without his being honoured with the lively attentions of a Northwich mob; Mr. Wesley, however, on this occasion, escaped any great personal violence. The people gathered from all parts, and were noisy and rude enough. The friends wished

him to stay till the mob was dispersed, but as they grew louder and louder, he judged it best to walk through the midst of them. Many things were thrown, but nothing hit him, till he took horse and rode to Manchester the same evening.

On the following Friday, during the same week, Mr. Wesley was at Macclesfield. He and his friends had some anxious consultations respecting Northwich. The success had not been very encouraging, and the persecution was so incessant, and also so vile and brutal, that it was now an anxious question whether the place should be altogether abandoned for a time, and the fate of the town (so far as Methodism was concerned), was trembling in the balance. Before, however, taking this step, Mr. Wesley decided to ride over from Macclesfield, and on Saturday, August 7th, 1762, he says, "*I made one more trial at Northwich, and preached in Mr. Page's yard. Abundance of people flocked together, nor did anyone oppose or make the least disturbance, and when I afterwards rode quite through the town, I had not one uncivil word.*" What a change in so short a time! Mr. Wesley reached Manchester the same evening.

I ought to observe that during all these years of persecution, the members of the infant society (many of them being poor men and women), were, almost without exception, true to their principles and profession, and "rejoiced that they were counted

worthy to suffer shame for His name." It is worthy of note that, though Northwich itself was terribly "scattered and peeled" by the most ruthless persecution, yet the infant society here had many warm friends in the country who nobly stood by them in their hours of trial. Among these were Mr. Barker, of Little Leigh, a gentleman of means; Mr. George Pugh, of the New Pale; Mr. and Mrs. Cross, of Booth Bank; Ralph and George Kinsey, of Gadbrook, besides some staunch friends at Alpraham and other places. These were days in which Christian workers were not afraid to use their legs, and when a walk of ten or twenty miles was a mere trifle in order to enjoy the luxury of Christian fellowship, and to drink of the new wine of the Kingdom.

When the fire of persecution had nearly burned itself out in the town, the services which for many years had been regularly held at Gadbrook were removed to Northwich, and the young Church began to feel more secure; and they managed to find shelter, and to continue their services in different places, as best they could for some years.

On Friday, August 16th, 1765, Mr. Wesley left Manchester in the early morning and rode through Northwich to Chester, and left word that he should return on the following Monday, and fixed to preach at ten in the morning. After fulfilling this appointment he rode to Gadbrook for dinner, and then rode to

Manchester where he preached the same evening. It is not probable that he was in Northwich again for six or eight years.

In the year 1770, or thereabout, some of the friends began to think and talk of a house of their own, and in those days this was a wonderful thing. There was probably not yet a single Methodist chapel in Cheshire (except the Octagon in Chester). The subject was agitated and discussed far and near for two or three years. It was not easy to get land; at length, however, a site was obtained, and subscriptions were now wanted; the list was headed by Mr. Daniel Barker, of Little Leigh, who promised three hundred pounds. Mr. Joseph Janion, of Park Side farm, Aston, a young man of something over twenty summers, and whose heart God had touched, now came to the front and was regarded as "the veteran youth." The Church now had comparative peace, friends sprang up in all directions, and in the year 1774 the foundation stone of a new chapel was laid in Leftwich.

On Thursday, April 7th, 1774, Mr. Wesley rode over from Manchester and preached a sermon at Northwich about noon, and merely remarks that "all persecution seems now to be at an end," and that "the place is as quiet as Manchester." And after witnessing the progress of the work in connection with the new chapel, he rode through Barnton, and preached in the evening at Little Leigh, which he

calls "a lovely spot." Here he stayed all night, and then went on by Weaverham Gate and the Bryn, to Chester. I am not able to go into the numerous incidents connected with this undertaking. I may observe, however, that "the people had a mind to work," and I may add that all the willing workers have long since emigrated to those shores where all men shall be "rewarded according to their works."

The new chapel was at length completed, and was ready for consecration in the special way and manner observed by the faithful. On Tuesday, March 21st, 1775, Mr. Wesley rode over from Macclesfield to Knutsford, where he had a large audience. He then rode over to Northwich, and on the evening of the same day he opened the present Leftwich chapel. He remained and preached a second opening sermon on the following evening. It is hardly necessary to say that the chapel was crammed in every part on both occasions.

At this time, Chester and Macclesfield were the only circuits in Cheshire. It was not till after Mr. Wesley's death in the year 1792, that Northwich became a circuit. I hope to find room for a list of the ministers from that time to our own day.

Little Leigh, which has several times been named in these pages, is a pleasant locality near the river Weaver, some four or five miles below Northwich.

This place was especially lovely and charming as the meeting-place of men and women who could afford to keep a conscience, and who knew what it was to suffer for Christ's sake. Here they met from time to time for years, and here they prayed and praised, and blessed God and each other. Mr. Daniel Barker was in the eyes of the world a very respectable man; he was also a devoted Christian, and his house and his heart were open to all who were like-minded. Mr. Wesley was at Acton Bridge near here, in April 1759, and at Little Leigh in 1761, 1764, and 1765; and on April 17th, 1777, he paid a short visit and found Mr. Barker "just tottering over the great gulf." This was the last visit that Mr. Wesley paid to Little Leigh.

On Easter Monday, April 5th, 1779, (four years after the opening of Leftwich chapel), Mr. Wesley, on his way from Manchester to Nantwich, came by way of Northwich, and preached in the evening, and remained all night. He says, "I used to go from hence to Little Leigh, but since Mr. Barker is gone hence, that place knows us no more. I cannot but wonder at the infatuation of men that really love and fear God, and yet leave a great part, if not all, their substance to men that neither love nor fear Him. Surely, if I did but little good with my money while I lived, I would at least do good with it when I could live no longer." These words, however just they

may be, appear rather severe upon a man who had not only been a pillar in the Church for twenty years, but who had in his lifetime given three hundred pounds towards the building of Leftwich chapel, which Mr. Wesley himself had opened on his last visit four years before. There is a tablet in Leftwich chapel to the memory of Mr. Barker, recording his gift as above.

On Thursday, March 30th, 1780, about noon, Mr. Wesley again preached in Leftwich chapel; he had come from Liverpool the same morning. He afterwards rode by Sandiway and Tarporley to Alpraham, where he preached the same evening. In the following year, May 18th, 1781, he again preached in Leftwich chapel at about eleven o'clock on Friday, the market day.

I do not find that Mr. Wesley was in Northwich again for nearly seven years. On Monday, April 14th, 1788, he left Macclesfield early in the morning, and preached in Leftwich chapel at noon, to such a congregation as scarce ever was seen there before, and he expresses a hope that after all the storms of persecution, good will be done at last. He preached in Chester the same evening.

In the following year, Thursday, July 16th, 1789, he left Chester, preached in Leftwich chapel about noon to a large and much-affected congregation, and preached in Manchester the same evening. At this

time Mr. Wesley was about eighty-six years of age.

Notwithstanding his age he left Manchester on Easter Monday, April 5th, 1790, rode to Northwich, and preached in Leftwich chapel at twelve o'clock to a large and very lively congregation, and then rode across the forest to Chester the same afternoon. On the following Saturday, April 10th, he paid a hurried visit to Northwich, and departed never to see it again.

I must apologise to my readers for this long digression. My purpose from the first has been to write mainly a record of my own experiences, and a brief history of men and things that I have known and seen with my own eyes; and yet, knowing as I do, that many good people know very little of the lives and times, and of the fights and struggles of our grandfathers, I judge it expedient in some degree to supply this lack. I may here observe, that it was on the occasion above-named of Mr. Wesley's visit, that my old friend Edward Dignum (then a boy), was not only present, but shook hands with the eminent man. I must now return to my purpose.

I have now before me an old book of the Northwich Society, with receipts and payments from 1792 to 1811, the circuit at that time was three times its present dimensions, and the income was of very modest proportions. The following is a list of places and revenue for the quarter ending September, 1798,

(among the items of expenditure every quarter is a bill of a few shillings for beer—what will my temperance friends say to this?)

			£	s.	d.
Northwich	...	...	3	15	6
Middlewich	...	...	1	2	6
Woodhouses (Frodsham)			0	7	0
Pool Lane	...	...	0	16	6
Booth Bank	...	...	0	11	6
Acton Bridge	...	...	0	7	6
Lymm	...	...	0	1	0
Mouldsworth	...	...	0	2	0
Knutsford	...	...	1	15	0
Wheatley	...	...	0	15	0
Warrington	...	...	1	17	0
Runcorn	...	...	1	1	0
Northwood	...	...	0	5	6
Kingsley	...	...	0	10	0
Comberbach	...	...	0	5	0
Frodsham	...	...	1	1	0
Preston Brook	...	...	1	1	0
Budworth	...	...	0	3	0
Barnton	...	...	0	5	5
Witton Brow	...	...	0	2	0
Wincham	...	...	0	10	0
Lostock	...	...	0	4	2
Total	...	...	16	18	7

The preachers were regularly two for each year, numbering in the twenty years more than twenty different men, among whom stand the names of Bardsley, Crowther, Lilly, Lessey, Townley, Yewdall, and other men of marked ability who were able to stand before kings. The wonder is how they lived.

There is no doubt that all of them could speak of "weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." They reckoned that they had a duty to do, and God being their helper, they were resolved to do it. Among the local preachers of those days we find the names of Barratt, Preston, Alcock, Morgan, Woodier, Young, Hulse, Garner, Vernon, Dunn, Dignum and others. At this time the junior preacher regularly boarded with the senior, and the charge for board was nine shillings per week.

Among the leaders of the town and neighbourhood we find the names of James Holford, Christopher Holford, John Harrison, Thomas Millington, James Bradshaw, D. Ball, Robert Johnson, William Wells, John Perryn, Ralph Garner, Stork, Stagg, Dignum and others. I have now brought my history down to our own times, and have linked the past with the present. Some of the men whose names I have given were well known to myself within forty or fifty years, and some of them more recently still.

It was about the year 1812 that the Leftwich chapel was enlarged, and was re-opened by the eminent Dr. Coke. Mr. Bradshaw, who had been a leading spirit since the days of Wesley, continued to be one of the chief men. He built two houses at the top of Witton Street which stood alone when first I knew them—one for himself and the other for

the senior preacher, (the time had not yet come for the second preacher to have a home of his own). He lived, and I believe, died in one of them within my own remembrance. This very residence which had been (what was called) a preacher's house for forty years, and where hundreds of the best men of the land had ever found a welcome resting place, is now at the moment that I am writing a common beer-house. Verily, as Uncle Tom said, "God lets very bad things to happen."

During the first quarter of the present century the service at the Methodist chapel was always at seven in the morning and six in the evening. No service was allowed to be held in church hours, which always were half-past ten and half-past two. I never knew an evening service in any church in Cheshire, until they were started some thirty years since in opposition (as admitted) to the Methodists. The Sunday school teachers at this time were Mr. Bradshaw, Mr. Millington, Mr. John Highfield, Mr. Firth, the banker, and his daughter, Mr. Bradshaw junior, and Mr. Samuel Arrowsmith; there was also Mr. Hand, an exciseman, who was an active man and a Sunday school teacher. His son afterwards became head-master of Witton Grammar School, and eventually died at Cheltenham many years since. I knew him well. In those days, the school children were regularly taken to church once a month. Many

of the things of which I am now writing happened more than seventy years since.

We are now coming into the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Many of the men who had lived in the days of Wesley, had emigrated to a better country, and very few now remained, besides Mr. Hewitt, of Comberbach, and Mr. Dignum, of Northwich. Fresh travelling preachers, or what were commonly called "round" preachers, were from time to time appointed, and among these we find the names of Warren, Jonathan Crowther, Shelmerdine, Reynolds, Hill, and Allen. I remember the three last, and often heard them preach. After these came Sykes, a clever old fellow, but a great oddity. He once fell foul on me with great severity, when I had done nothing amiss.

The local preachers and leaders who had stepped into the shoes of their predecessors, had now become very numerous; some of their names will appear in future pages.

We have seen that in the year 1827 a great revival of religion broke out at Cranage and Holmes Chapel, when in June of that year a new class of fifty members applied for their quarterly tickets. They were nearly all young converts, and were full of life and zeal. The Rev. Thomas Hill, who was then about to leave the circuit, was greatly surprised and gratified at this visible sign of success. This move-

ment spread to almost every part of the circuit, and lasted more or less for several years, and it might truly be said, that there were added to the church daily such as should be saved.

After the year 1830, there came rumours from many parts of the Continent and elsewhere, that the Asiatic cholera was present in many foreign seaports and other places, and a feeling of alarm began to spread itself through this country. Several towns each autumn were visited, and many fatal cases were reported. It was not, however, until the year 1833, that it came to Northwich with great force and virulence. Numbers of well-known persons were in good health yesterday, and dead to-day. Death was in our midst, and the pestilence raged in a very alarming manner; the inhabitants were panic-stricken, and rushed in crowds to places of worship. Leftwich chapel was crammed day and night, and the people were crying "What shall we do?"

It happened just at this time when the cholera was raging in the town, that the Rev. Thomas Hill, who had travelled in the circuit a few years before, was passing through the town on the stage coach, and he was persuaded to stay and preach for them on the week-night. The chapel was crowded, and he took for his text, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," etc. I was not personally present, but an old friend and eye-witness gave me a full report. It was

a marvellous service—scores were crying for mercy, and scores were praying for them. The movement was tremendous and irresistible, and it was nearly midnight before the service could be closed.

Mr. Hill was a most able preacher, very impassioned, and very popular. He spoke to the effect that many victims had been laid upon the altar, and we were suffering for our sin, and it became us to be clad in sackcloth, and to sit among the ashes, and to cry mightily unto God. He then vividly spoke of the light that had come in the person of the Saviour of sinners; and finally, he, with a beaming face and the authority of a prophet, declared that divine wrath was pacified, that the terrible pestilence was at an end, and that the sword was suspended. The effect was electrical, not only in the chapel, but throughout the town. It seemed like the language of inspiration. It was on everybody's tongue. It was the language of hope and reprieve, and strange to say, from that day the plague was stayed.

I do not mean to say that there was not another case. I mean that we had reached the turning-point, that the crisis was passed, and the worst was over. I remember that the side streets of the town were blocked; there was a rope stretched across at the entrance of Crown Street, with the ominous words, "No person allowed to enter this street." Other side streets were the same, and the silence was like the

silence of death. A Mr. William Wallace, who kept a chemist's shop in the Bull Ring, and who was a local preacher, earned very great honours. He feared nothing, and day and night was foremost among the dead and the dying, and nobly risking his own life for the good of others. Such men are the bravest of all earth's heroes, and their noble deeds are registered on high. There was a hospital in Timber Lane, and I think one or more besides.

Shortly after Mr. Hill's sermon above-named, and his memorable prophecy, a great relief began to be experienced, the people began to breathe more freely in the belief that the destroying angel had passed over. The strict regulations began to be relaxed, and business began to be resumed, and from day to day the plague gradually abated, until it became nearly extinct. I could easily give a much longer history of the cholera in Northwich, and of what I know personally, but let this suffice. Old Mr. Arthur Anderson of Marston, lately deceased, was a witness of these things. He was a Methodist of long standing, and died only a few years since, at the age of about eighty years.

My old friend Mr. Henry Bratt, one of the most regular and reliable of Christian men, was also a witness of these things, and was also a witness of the events of Mr. Sugden's reign, as set forth in the following pages. He died in Station Road,

Witton, a few years since. He was probably eighty years of age.

It is an old saying that calamities seldom come alone, and some of us can remember that when we have had one trouble, there has sometimes come a second, and a third. One of our best writers says

"Rare are solitary woes,
They love a train,
They tread each other's heel."

The visitation of the cholera to Northwich was a sad and melancholy period in the history of the town, and yet there was something worse to follow. There occurred one particular thing in this year, which I regard in its results as a most unfortunate circumstance for the cause of religion in Cheshire, and for the cause of Methodism in particular.

It was in this very year, 1833, that the Rev. Samuel Sugden, of abhorred memory, was sent to Northwich, and was actually put down as superintendent of the circuit. He was a man upon whose physical structure and mental calibre nature had not been very lavish; or to speak plainly, he was some degrees beneath ordinary mediocrity in every respect. His complexion was somewhat tawny, a few degrees removed from the nigger, and he had a very see-saw and monotonous style of address, peculiarly his own. He was altogether a very common uncultured man of very little education, and was wonderfully inflated with

a sense of his own importance. He did not forget to let us know that he was the authorised representative and executive of Methodism and of Methodist law, and that he was clothed with administrative authority.

At the time of which I am now speaking, Frodsham was in the Northwich circuit, and some superior local preachers lived there.

After the Conference of 1834, there was great agitation among the Methodist people as to some alleged new things that had been introduced into the body, and as to some alleged laws and usages being superseded.

Very early in the year 1835 this agitation reached Northwich, and a meeting (called by somebody), was held in the old Congregational chapel, Crown Street, (now Hobson's printing shop). I was present at the meeting; Rev. Job Wilson, the aged Congregational minister, presided. I remember his words. Dr. Warren, and a Mr. Hughes, of Manchester, spoke. There were also upon the platform, among others, the following local preachers: Thompson, Wallace, Parry, Griffith, and Edwards. Every one of these men spoke more or less, and I have some recollection of every speech.

I can safely say that from first to last not one disloyal or unfriendly word was spoken by any of the local preachers, every man seemed to be animated

by a sincere desire that Methodism should become a great national blessing, and that its success should not be hindered by any little jealousy or petty tyranny.

About this time Mr. Sugden heard that the local preachers of Frodsham had made Dr. Warren a present of a cheese, accompanied by a complimentary letter, and though he had no knowledge of the contents of the letter, nor had he charged any of the men, yet he actually issued his fulminating bull, and suspended at one stroke the whole batch of them.

There was a great sensation in Frodsham; his own trusted friends saw the absurdity of the whole thing, and he at length consented to retain their names on the coming plan, giving them few or no appointments. I have now in my possession the identical original plans, which I can produce in confirmation of these things.

Mr. Sugden issued his *ipse dixit*, that the meeting above-named was illegal, and Mr. Thompson was forthwith summoned to a leaders' meeting, and was charged with "attending and taking part in an illegal meeting." Mr. Thompson was a builder and timber merchant, and there was also a Mr. George Stringer who was in the same trade, and he had a son-in-law, a Mr. John Fowles. They were both leaders, and were both opposed to Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Fowles gave evidence against him. Mr. Thompson contended

that the meeting was in no way illegal. It was merely a meeting of local preachers who were all good friends to the cause, and were still prepared to work and suffer for it, and challenged Mr. Sugden to produce evidence that it was illegal. Mr. Sugden was entirely unable to produce one tittle of evidence that the meeting was illegal. He merely said, "I declare it to be illegal, and that is enough."

Many other points were raised, and Mr. Thompson, who was an able man and had a logical mind, was more than a match for his judge, and in fact Mr. Sugden might be likened to a mouse in the paws of a cat.

Before this time, the orthodox sentence of expulsion adopted in Manchester and other places, was in these words, "I declare in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that you are no longer a member of our society." Mr. Sugden being satisfied that Mr. Thompson had taken part in the alleged illegal meeting, and being entirely unable to contend with his antagonist on the law of the case, cut the matter short, and in passing sentence, I will do him the justice to say that he was innocent of all allusion to the Trinity, he merely said, "I declare you to be no longer a member of our society."

Mr. William Wallace, who had but recently rendered such signal service during the cholera, and

also Mr. Parry, were summoned at the same time before Mr. Sugden's high court. There was no witness whatever to testify that these two either attended or took part in this alleged illegal meeting, and yet they were both expelled by Mr. Sugden at the same time, in a very summary manner.

I am reminded of Samuel, the prophet, who "went in circuit to Gilgal, and Bethel, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places." So Mr. Sugden now went in circuit, not to preach the gospel, but to judge the criminals who were now swarming in all directions. Mr. William Griffith was a talented young man, and lived at Middlewich; he was summoned to a leaders' meeting. The leaders all refused to be any party to the proceedings, but the trial was cut short by the usual sentence, "I declare you no longer a member of our society." I shall have a few words more to say of him when I am dealing with my friends at Middlewich.

Mr. Sugden then proceeded to Frodsham to hold his court for the trial of offenders, and Mr. James Edwards was summoned to appear before him. Mr. Edwards was notorious, he had not only attended the illegal meeting at Northwich, but he was one of the men who had actually been guilty of sending a cheese and a friendly letter to Dr. Warren. Mr. Edwards was a very intelligent man. He was one of the "men that had understanding of the times to

know what Israel ought to do." He stood upon his legal rights, and asked Mr. Sugden to produce his witnesses. It so happened that Mr. Sugden was not prepared with any evidence, and required Mr. Edwards to either confess or deny. Mr. Edwards replied, "I shall do neither the one nor the other, it is for you to prove your case, I am the accused party, and you cannot ask me to convict myself." There was a warm contention. Mr. Clarke, a good man, quoted some passage of scripture, when Mr. Sugden replied, "I have nothing to do with the Bible." "What," said Mr. Clarke, laying his hand on the Bible, "have you nothing to do with this blessed book?" "No!" said Mr. Sugden, "it is Methodism that I have to do with, and I shall defend the conference with all my *mental* and *muscular* power." The mention of his "*mental* and *muscular* power," of which he possessed but a small stock of either the one or the other, provoked an outburst of laughter among the leaders present, which Mr. Sugden regarded as a laugh of ridicule.

It happened that the leaders were dead against him, almost to a man. Mr. Sugden then said, "Well if you do not deny it, I shall conclude that you are guilty, and I declare that you are no longer a member of our society."

Mr. Sugden not only expelled Mr. Edwards, but

he gave all the leaders who had supported him to understand, that if they did not humble themselves and comply with his wishes, he should serve them all the same. I don't suppose that Frodsham was ever honoured with such a court of justice before. The result of all this was that nearly all the preachers and best men of the place were cut off at a stroke. If Mr. Sugden had been anything like a gentleman and a Christian, the people would have been very loth indeed to have opposed his wishes in any respect. Further particulars relating to Mr. James Edwards will be found in future pages where I speak of Frodsham.

Mr. Sugden's colleague was the Rev. Joseph Jackson. When he was planned at Holmes Chapel, he would sometimes come on the Saturday, to be ready for his work on the following day. I remember on one occasion we had a jugged hare for supper, and my mother gave us a history of its capture. It seemed that it had been caught by a greyhound, and that there had been a very exciting race, in the presence of a lot of spectators, who cheered the dog shouting, "Loo! loo! loo!" but one of my brothers shouted, "Now, hare! now, hare!" I remember that Mr. Jackson relished the hare. He wiped his mouth and would take a little more, and directly he burst into loud laughter and said, "I was only thinking about "Now, dog! now, hare!" The end

of it was, that if the dog had not caught the hare, we should not have had it for supper. He was a fair preacher, but I fear that he did not pray much.

The few cases which I have given are not a twentieth part of the expulsions which took place during Mr. Sugden's reign. In many cases entire classes were practically expelled wholesale without any sort of trial whatever, because their leader was suspected. An intimation was given to the members in such cases, that if they would leave their old leaders, they would be received back into the fold, and annexed to some other class. It was very sad to see old veteran members, both men and women, husbands and wives, and in some cases whole families pitched overboard without a thought, because they did not sanction Mr. Sugden's proceedings. The state of things was distressing in the extreme. Old friendships cemented by a generation of toil and suffering were ruthlessly broken for ever.

The case of Mr. Dignum may be taken as a sample of scores besides. He was a scholarly old gentleman, and was able to read his Hebrew Bible. After a generation of active service he removed to Frodsham, where his son Edward (an excellent man) resided, and here he ended his pilgrimage. The following is a copy of his funeral card :

“ In affectionate remembrance of
EDWARD DIGNUM,
(late of Northwich),
Who died at Frodsham, Jan. 24th, 1874.
Aged (20 days short of) 92 years,
And was interred at Witton church, Northwich, Jan. 28th.
He shook hands with the venerable
and now sainted Wesley on his last visit to Northwich
in the year 1790, and has been an accredited local preacher
for the space of 78 years.

His last words were :

“ I long to behold Him arrayed
With glory and light from above,
The King in His beauty displayed,
His beauty of holiest love ;
I languish and sigh to be there,
Where Jesus hath fixed His abode ;
O when shall we meet in the air,
And fly to the mountain of God ? ”

Mr. Dignum's years and honours, and long services, were counted as nothing; he was one of those whose service dated from Wesley. His name had stood next to old Mr. Hewitt on the top of the preachers' plan for many years. Twenty years before this, he was Mr. Dodson's righthand man at Holford mill, and had probably done more than any other man, in finding a good footing for Methodism, not only in the town, but in all the villages around. He had more sterling worth in his little finger, than Mr. Sugden had in his whole system. He and his old friend Mr. Hewitt “did much confer, and council held.” Mr. Hewitt was very angry, and wished that

Dr. Bunting had been on the deserts of Africa, instead of busying himself about a college for the Methodists.

The fact is that they both rejoiced in the successes of Methodism in the past, and were afraid that the proposed college would lead to pride and self-glorification, and that there would be less success in the future than in the past. The vaticinations of these two wise men have been fulfilled. Since the agitation began Mr. Dignum had been very quiet—had taken no side—but it oozed out that he did not agree with Mr. Sugden, whereupon his name ultimately disappeared from the plan without a word, and he was forced into the ranks of the seceders, or in other words he was expelled without a trial. When Mr. Hewitt heard this, he urged Mr. Dignum to start another class, and join the seceders, which he did. Mr. Hewitt was an old man, living in the country, whose work was done, or he would most certainly have been expelled; he, however, escaped, and his name remained to the day of his death.

Mr. Dignum became (of course) one with the Methodist Free Church, and his revered name stood at the top of the preacher's plan to the day of his death.

When Mr. Hewitt saw that his end was coming, he wished Mr. Dignum to preach his funeral sermon, and fixed the text, "I have fought a good fight," etc.

He lived only some three or four years after this, and Mr. Dignum fulfilled his wish in the original tabernacle, and he then related the facts which I have given above.

After these things, events seem to have passed rapidly. The seceders, with Mr. Thompson as a leading spirit, began to hold separate services in a room in the Dane Bridge warehouse, now a corn mill. Mr. John Fowles, who had given evidence against Mr. Thompson, took the room as a tenant, and succeeded in dispossessing them. He, however, died suddenly soon after, and in some three or four years his father-in-law, Mr. Stringer, died also. Before his death he had got mixed up in some law with Mr. Thomas Fowles, and had left the society, or rather (as the report said), his name was dropped by Rev. Charles Janion, who was the son of Mr. J. Janion, the early Methodist of the last century.

In confirmation of my remarks, I will refer my readers to the printed minutes of Conference, which show that the average annual increase for some years had been more than a hundred members, and when Mr. Sugden came into the circuit he found over one thousand six hundred and thirty members in society, and if he had gone on properly, as a Christian minister ought to do, this number during his two years of office would have reached more than one thousand eight hundred members. So far from there

being an increase, which there ought to have been, it is proved by the printed minutes that during the second and last year of his office, there had been scattered to the winds and to the world more than nine hundred and thirty members, leaving only seven hundred. It is probable that the entire annals of Methodism could not produce in any one year, by any one man, such a record of havoc and slaughter.

It is not probable that one in ten of these members ever returned to the fold.

I do not think that in the interests of discipline there was ever the slightest necessity to expel one single member, knowing as I do, that we were almost to a man sound at heart, and loyal to the cause.

I think that I have made good my words, that the day which brought Mr. Sugden among us, was the most calamitous day that ever dawned upon Northwich, and that in its final results, it was far worse than either plague or pestilence. I had an idea before this time, that almost the entire town and country would soon be brought under the gracious influence of divine truth, and my young sanguine heart believed that all this was almost within our grasp; but we were doomed to suffer a disastrous repulse, and from that day to this, during the long period of fifty years, we have never fully recovered our power and prestige, nor have we ever fully regained our lost ground.

On the first of March, 1835, Mr. Sugden issued

the usual preachers' plan, and it is worthy of note that the names of Thompson, Wallace, Parry, Griffith and Edwards, are all conspicuous by their absence. They had all been expelled before the issue of this plan. The new plan was for March, April and May. By the end of April, however, about fifteen more preachers had been expelled, making about half of the whole number, and such was the state of confusion arising from the fact that the expelled preachers were not only taking their ordinary appointments, but in addition to this, there were many more prospective appointments during the month of May, which the preachers would of course take, just as if they had not been expelled. This was not to be permitted, and Mr. Sugden issued a new plan for the month of May, superseding the old one.

In the new plan, all the appointments which had been given to the expelled preachers were now given to other preachers. The consequence was that two different men were appointed for the same pulpits throughout the circuit, each of them could take his plan out of his pocket, and could show that he was the properly appointed preacher. The confusion was indescribable and shameful. There were many cases of strife. The question frequently was as to which of the two men was first in the pulpit, and in some cases there was no service at all. To add to the confusion the new community, in the month of May

in this year, issued its first new preachers' plan. I have all these originals now in my possession, and taken altogether, they supply a most hopeless entanglement of confusion.

It will be understood that Mr. Sugden had commenced his work of excision in February, and in less than three months he had expelled publicly and privately about twenty local preachers and some hundreds of leaders and members, and yet it will be proper to say that very many, moved with sympathy for their expelled brethren, did not wait to be expelled, but quietly withdrew. There is no doubt that Mr. Sugden by his extraordinary conduct forced into existence in the Northwich circuit a new community, forming a part of what was then known as the "Wesleyan Association," and which has subsequently become the "Methodist Free Church."

At this time old Thomas Foxley was chapel-keeper at Leftwich, and was also a leader, he had the reputation of being a good man. There was also an elderly and poor man of the name of Chesters, who had a good name, but I hardly knew him personally.

On the tenth of May in this year a new and first preachers' plan was issued, embracing in its first issue nineteen local preachers, all of whom had been either publicly or privately expelled by Mr. Sugden. This plan is said to have been the very first ever

printed by the new community, and there is no doubt that this may be attributed to the reckless promptitude of Mr. Sugden, with whom there was no postponement, no forbearance, and no mercy, and it has since been alleged that not one single offender who was brought before him escaped the severe sentence of the law, which was in every case Methodistic death without benefit of clergy.

My readers will see that I do not attempt to argue or contend as to who was right or who was wrong during these days of strife.

My purpose is merely to state the facts which came under my own notice, and I must decline to discuss at length the merits or demerits of the vexed question.

It is very likely that my strictures upon Mr. Sugden will be thought rather severe, and my readers will begin to wonder whether his conduct, as described, was compatible with mental and moral sanity.

There have been cases of men whose minds have been deranged and yet there has been "method in the madness," and it has often been found that while there was "a seeming rightness of perception, there has been no abatement of the malady."

It never seems to have occurred to anybody that possibly Mr. Sugden was not responsible for his actions, and yet it was a constant wonder that any rational man would do such things.

To speak plainly, I incline to the opinion that when he was scattering firebrands and death from one end of the circuit to the other he was really the subject of incipient insanity. Apart from Christianity, I do not see how any man with a clear head and a sound judgment could do such things. The people compared him to a bull in a china shop. He seemed to have no idea that he was scattering firebrands and death, and was quite indifferent as to the result. I fear that we are driven to one, and only one, conclusion, that his mental power, such as it was, had begun to wane, and that whatever he had formerly been, he was now entirely incapable of holding the judicial scales or of exercising any judicial power in any reasonable fashion.

The name of Mr. Dignum does not appear on the first plan. He had not yet been expelled. The name of Mr. John Thompson, however, appears as one of the "nineteen," and not only so, but in a few months a Wesleyan Association circuit was formed, embracing in the aggregate some five hundred members. The seceders in the town, who had been for a short time worshipping in the Dane Bridge warehouse, received notice to quit. This was brought about, as we have seen, by the interference of Mr. John Fowles, who was very inveterate against Mr. Thompson and all his belongings. No sooner was this notice received, than Mr. Thompson and

his friends managed to get a plot of vacant land on or near Baron's Quay, and they decided at once to erect a wooden building, and in a few months this wooden building was put up, and was ready to be opened for public worship. It was opened, as nearly as I can remember, in the autumn of 1835. Here it stood for some ten years, and being constructed of movable timbers it was, after the fashion of a tabernacle, taken to pieces and removed to where it now stands, and did duty as a place of worship for nearly another ten years, when it was superseded by the present Witton Street chapel, which was opened in 1854. The old tabernacle is still standing in its original form and size. It is now a very commodious carriage-house, and is in the occupation of Mr. James Chambers, coach proprietor. It is an object of interest and curiosity, and tells plainer than words what men in earnest can do in an emergency.

Mr. John Thompson was skilled in building. He designed and carried into effect not only the old tabernacle, but also the present Witton Street chapel. He was a local preacher, and was my own personal friend for many years, was wonderfully loyal to principle, and, cost what it might, he would not swerve from conscientious convictions. On some occasions he represented the circuit in the annual assembly, was indefatigable in the temperance cause, and was a leading spirit in many good things.

There is now a portrait of him in the Central Hall, with this inscription:—"John Thompson, a distinguished citizen of this town, a champion of temperance, and a devoted servant of God and man. Died June, 1867, aged sixty-seven years." He was buried in the grounds of Witton Street chapel, amid great lamentation. I was present at his funeral.

Mr. William Wallace, another of the expelled, whose name has been before mentioned, was a druggist in the town. A short time after this he removed to Manchester, and afterwards went abroad, so that I am not able to write any further history of his life. His name appears on the first plan as one of the nineteen. Mr. Parry, who then lived at Marston, removed to Shurlach, and afterwards to Davenham, and finally he became a large farmer, having succeeded to the Shipbrook Hill farm, where he lived for many years, and where he ended his pilgrimage, and is succeeded on the same farm by his son.

Soon after his expulsion he opened his little farm kitchen at Shurlach for Sabbath service, and very soon there was a desire for a chapel, and I was deputed to see the owner of a likely site, who lived at Stockport. I found him a big, fat man, and told him my business. He walked backward and forward, puffing and panting, in his big, dirty warehouse, and said that he should do nothing of the sort. He said

that his tenant had been making great complaints about the lads trespassing on his farm, breaking fences, and doing great damage, and he certainly should do nothing for such folk until they knew how to behave themselves. I assented at once to all he said, that the place abounded with lawless lads, who were Sabbath-breaking and doing all sorts of mischief, and I added, "We are intending to have a Sunday school, and we intend to do our best to gather in these lads, and to remedy the very evil of which you complain." He puffed and blowed, and hesitated, and then said, "Aw, aw! Perhaps you are right. Well, you shall have the land." The chapel was built, and opened in 1846, and the land cost us nothing. I was a shy young man at the time, but I gained my point very nicely with the old landowner.

It was the common practice forty or fifty years since, in the early days of the Wesleyan Association, to hold a series of missionary meetings in one week, usually on the Monday, in Northwich, and during several subsequent evenings in the distant villages, some of them five to ten miles distant. The services of Mr. Parry at these meetings were very valuable. He had a market shandry that would carry four or five persons, and for many years he volunteered to supply horse and shandry, and himself to act as driver, from day to day for several successive evenings,

and he was always ready to make a good missionary speech into the bargain.

It happened in the autumn of 1840, that a missionary meeting was held at Holmes Chapel, which was attended by Rev. M. Baxter, Mr. John Sutton, and one or two besides, and Mr. Parry was driving them home in his shandry as usual.

They had with them their money bag, containing some pounds in copper, silver and gold, the entire proceeds of the missionary anniversary. The night was dark and very late when Mr. Parry, the driver, got off the road and upset his entire cargo into a ditch, which there was then very near where the Penny's Lane chapel now stands. It was a very disagreeable affair; four or five gentlemen with horse and carriage in a broad dirty ditch in the dark hours of midnight.

Rev. M. Baxter made no inquiry as to broken legs, broken arms, or broken heads, but true to his instinct, he cried out, "Brother Sutton, the money! the money! where is the money bag?" Some of us to this day never forgot the natural instincts of Rev. M. Baxter. Fortunately, however, they all escaped without serious injury. This is only one of the many disasters which happened on these missionary expeditions.

The last time that I visited Mr. Parry, I took down in writing his final testimony. It was now

nearly fifty years since his expulsion. He was one of the "nineteen" whose names appeared on the first plan, and he did not regret anything except that he had not been more useful. He had then given up the farm to his son, and he said they were all very kind to him, and he wanted for nothing. He spoke of Jordan's banks, and of his blooming hope, and commissioned me to give his dying love to his Christian brethren. He died as good men die, in December, 1885, aged eighty-five years, and was buried at Davenham. I attended his funeral. He had been a local preacher about fifty-eight years. He was the last survivor of the first five victims of expulsion. He was blessed with a most excellent wife. Mrs. Parry was a very active and generous woman, and always ready to give a helping hand in every hour of need. Their house was a welcome home for the preachers and friends for half-a-century. She died four years before her husband. I preached funeral sermons for them both, and many tears were shed.

Of the nineteen local preachers whose names appear on the first plan, the greater part of them lived in the country, and their names will, for the most part, be found elsewhere. There was one more, however, who lived in the town, and whose name has not been mentioned. I refer to William Jackson, a very studious, judicious, and well-conducted young

man. He does not appear to have been mixed up in any of the contentions, and yet there is no doubt that he sympathised with his expelled brethren. Be this as it may, his name counts as one of the nineteen. Some two or three years after this he was recommended as being well qualified for the office of travelling preacher. He was examined, accepted, and called out into the Itinerary. He has travelled in Keighley, Cornwall, Hull, Manchester, Bradford, Todmorden, Rochdale and other circuits, and after near forty years of hard work and blameless life, he is now a supernumerary in Exeter. He has a brother now living in Castle, of unblemished name and much respected. I have now made mention of those of the "nineteen" who belonged to the town society. The names of the others will be found elsewhere. It would not be difficult for me to write out a long list of good men and good women that I have known, local preachers, leaders and members, belonging to the different churches, who in their day did well and truly serve their generation, and "Nobly for their Master stood." I am now referring more especially to those who have long since crossed the river. The names of many of them will be found in the latter portion of this book.

I must now proceed to speak of men that I have known in other parts.

Old John Sutton, or as he was popularly called, Little Sutton, was a very remarkable man in his day. He was almost a cripple—hunchbacked, and a foot lower than the ordinary stature of men. He was, nevertheless, a man of great shrewdness and ready wit. He was an excellent walker, and was never frightened by a journey of ten or fifteen miles. He came on the plan as a local preacher of the Wesleyan body in 1819, and joined the Wesleyan Association in 1835. He was remarkable for life and zeal, and was generally very popular, and though he was a very poor man, he had very correct views of courteous and gentlemanly conduct, and he was always respectful and polite in his demeanor. He was a shoemaker by trade, and was very often on the verge of want, yet he has often been heard to say that he never did want, for just at the last moment Providence always interfered on his behalf. He regularly visited nearly all the places in the Northwich circuit, which was then nearly twenty miles from end to end. He died in March, 1843, and was interred at Witton church. I attended his funeral, and there were many hundreds of persons present besides myself. The Rev. David Rutherford, who was then travelling in the Northwich circuit, attended the funeral, and stood on a gravestone in the churchyard, and addressed the crowd of people, pointing out that a good man had fallen, and urging

the people to follow his example, as he had followed Christ. He was one of the famous "nineteen" whose names appear on the first Wesleyan Association plan, which was printed in May, 1835. He lived in Pickmere, and belonged to the Wincham society. He was one of the best known men in the circuit in his day, and was always "valiant for the truth." He was a great favourite with all the Dodsons of Holford, for more than fifteen years.

One of the most singular men among the Methodists of Northwich was John Sutton, junior. He was nephew of John Sutton of Pickmere, who died in 1843. He was a bachelor all his life, and for many years of his life he was a schoolmaster; and was also an accountant, and often acted as a surveyor, measuring up the work of bricklayers, joiners and others. His mother and sister lived with him, and they were both mentally weak, eccentric and erratic, and many singular stories are told of them; and on some occasions John was greatly annoyed and insulted by their foolish talking. On one occasion John was talking with three gentlemen in the street, when his sister, who was getting a middle-aged woman, called him, "John, John, you're wanted." John replied, "I'll come, when I've done with these gentlemen;" when his sister replied, "Gentlemen! gentlemen! indeed! O gracious! fine gentlemen, neither wit, money, nor manners." Of course John

felt himself very much insulted, but there was no help for this vulgarity. On another occasion a gentleman of some position and character in the town, who was also a religious man, called to see John, when his sister very vulgarly said to the gentleman, "You're gaping after all the world." He stood upon his dignity and said, "What do you mean, Mary?" She says, "I mean what I say, you're gaping after all the world." The mother was very little better, for in the year 1838, when the new minister, the Rev. Matthew Baxter, arrived, he found his way to John Sutton's house; there was no one in but his mother, the old woman; she left the minister in the house, and sallied forth into the street in search of John, shouting to almost everyone she saw, saying, "Our Jack is the biggest fool in all England. The new parson's come, and aw dunner know what to do with him." Things like these were very annoying to John, who stood upon his dignity, and had a good amount of self-importance. By-the-bye he was lame, and walked with a limp, which caused Dr. Reynolds, a wit in the town, to remark that John Sutton had more ups and downs in Northwich than any other man. He was connected with Methodism from his early days, but did not become a local preacher until the division in 1835, when we find his name on trial on the first plan. He was a man with a remarkable memory, and was never known to admit that he

ever forgot anything, and was hardly ever known to admit that he did not know, or was not able to answer any question that was put to him. The nearest approach to ignorance that I ever knew him to make was, "I could know for a penny." Being very ready with his pen he often officiated as circuit secretary, and for a short time, at least, acted as circuit steward. He was very eccentric, and by some was suspected of a little vanity, and yet I am bound to say, notwithstanding this, that in many respects he had no equal, and was one of the best and most faithful servants in connection with the Methodist Free Churches. If a preacher was wanted hurriedly to supply a vacancy, he was worth all the men in the town, and though he was lame he would trudge from one end of the town to the other, far and near, in search of a supply. He has done me good service in this respect over and over again, and I shall always respect his memory. He was a man of considerable ability, very methodical in his habits, and very constant and successful as a class leader. He died suddenly, in January, 1872, aged sixty-nine. He was received on the local preachers' plan on trial in the year 1835, and he held his position with unabated ability for over thirty-five years.

One of Mr. Sutton's contemporaries was Mr. Samuel Sadler, a brother local preacher, who had been for a while a home missionary. They began

together, and worked and walked together nearly all their days. He died in October, 1869, and Mr. Sutton survived him about two years.

Mr. Francis Williams, son of Mr. Williams of Norley, was converted when very young. He was hardly beyond his teens when he became a draper in the town—he was a man before his years—was an acceptable local preacher for many years. At the age of forty his health began to fail. I saw him again and again during his decline. He died in April, 1861, leaving a good testimony behind him. His widow is still with us, and does credit to his good name.

My first visit to Wincham was in the year 1838. At that time I was in delicate health, and rode on a mule. The service was on the Sunday afternoon, at the house of old Mr. Tankard, close by the canal side. The house was crowded, and the people were all alive. I was not well, and nearly fainted, but soon recovered. Henry Richardson was then in his prime. He was a faithful class leader for many years, he was an example of fidelity to the cause. He lived to the age of ninety-one years, and died in May, 1883. These were the days of old John Sutton, of Pickmere, whose name appears elsewhere. His class met at the house of Mr. Samuel Massey, father of the Rev. Samuel Massey now in Canada. Mrs. Massey, familiarly called "Old Nanny," was a true disciple. Samuel

Whittaker became leader of the same class; he died in the faith, in the year 1879. John Venables was a sincere class leader, he died in 1872, and was succeeded by another good man, Joseph Williams, often found at the bedside of the sick and dying, he died in 1874.

My good friends at Wincham managed to build their first little chapel in 1846. It was opened by Rev. Thomas Hacking, on July 19th. He had a crowded place, and twenty-one pounds was taken up as a collection. The Rev. William Dawson was then stationed in Northwich. The trustees of the first chapel were John Rayner, a class leader, who died in 1851; William Harrison, who died in 1871; John Venables, Samuel Whittaker, and eight others. Many of them are gone. The old chapel has been enlarged, and made into a Sunday school, and a new and much larger chapel was built some years since, and has been consecrated by the conversion of sinners. The trustees of the new chapel are Isaac Robinson, Arthur Anderson, John Alcock, Henry Jervis, and about eight other good and true men. Wincham has long been noted for faithful, praying women. Many of them deserve a tribute to their memory. Their own works have praised, and their Master has said, "Well done."

In the year 1820 Mr. Thomas Wild joined the Methodist society at Hartford, near Northwich. In

a very short time there was a great move among the people who lived there. The services were held from time to time, in different cottages, and many persons joined the society, and many more attended the public services. There was no church at that time in Hartford. The few church people became concerned, and were afraid that all the people would become Methodists unless a church were built, which it was thought might stop the movement. The church at Hartford was built about the year 1822. The declared and urgent object was to stem the advancing tide of Methodism.

The present Methodist chapel in Hartford was built in 1833. The late Mr. Daniel Wrench joined the Methodist church at that time; he soon became a leader, and sustained the office without a faltering step for over forty years. The chapel cost two hundred and fifty-five pounds, and was opened on the week-day by Mr. Bowers, and was followed on the Sunday by Mr. Jonathan Crowther, whose sermon was founded on being sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise. The first trustees were John Ward, Thomas Crimes, James Birtwistle, George Stringer, John Lea, and Thomas Wild. I knew five of them well, personally. The second batch of trustees were Daniel Wrench, Thomas Moreton, Ezra Gandy, Henry Sanderson, and others, all well known to me.

After these things, Mr. Wild removed to Weaverham Wood, where he lived till the year 1875. He was a local preacher over forty years, and was one of those that might be counted on in connection with the Methodist church at Weaverham for a generation. In his earlier days, the service at the Methodist chapel was at half-past one, so as to give the people the opportunity of going to church. Things have changed since the former days. Mr. Wild was an old friend of mine. He was buried at Whitegate. His son, Mr. John Wild, lived at Stretton, and has since removed to Great Budworth.

Weaverham, like many other places, was a long time before it was able to supply the early Methodists with a resting place for the ark. The services for many years were held in cottages, and the last cottage, so far as I know, that was blessed with the presence of the little flock, was at Forster's smithy, near Weaverham Gate. Mr. James Birtwistle, of the Forest, was reckoned one of the old standards, and took a leading part in the Methodism of Weaverham; he was a local preacher of the old school, and died in October, 1858, aged eighty-eight years. John Jones was an excellent and humble local preacher. He lived at a cottage midway between Hartford and Weaverham. He died in 1870, and was buried at Weaverham. Mr. Daniel Wrench, of Hartford, had a servant boy, named Richard Wrench (not related

to his master). This boy was steady and studious, gave himself to reading; he went to Scotland to be trained as a schoolmaster, and got an appointment in Cornwall. He became religious, and became a local preacher. He was afterwards examined as a candidate for the ministry, and became a travelling preacher, and went to Africa, and the last that I heard of him was that he was well known in the United States as the Rev. Richard Wrench, and was travelling as a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in that country. So much for a farmer's servant boy, who, instead of following the foolish, began to read and study Wesley's sermons. The Rev. Charles Janion knew and could testify of these things. "Blessed are they that do His commandments."

Mr. Henry Sanderson, of Wallerscote, was one of Weaverham's best men, true to the last. He was an old friend of mine. In his day, the Methodists of Weaverham managed to raise a new and better chapel, where on one or two occasions I have met my loyal old friend. He died only a few years since. Mr. John Moreton, of the Moss, and Mr. Thomas Kinsey, of Davenham, were among the faithful, and had good names in their day. They served their generation and are fallen asleep.

CHAPTER IX.



ONE of the most remarkable local men in connection with Methodism, was Mr. Joseph Janion. He was born in the year 1750, at the Park Side in Aston, a farm which recently has become notorious as the place where the new and mysterious cattle disease called anthrax has broken out, creating considerable alarm among some of the farmers in Cheshire. His father had a number of children, and it happened that one of his daughters became the wife of Mr. John Gardner, an exceedingly pious and devoted local preacher among the Methodists in the Chester circuit. One of the first and most lasting impressions made upon Mr. Janion's mind, was caused by reading Hervey's Dialogues, which had been lent to him by his brother-in-law, Mr. John Gardner.

He was now but little more than twenty years of age, and was the subject of much mental agitation and anxiety. Methodism was then entirely unknown in the locality, but he heard that the Methodist preachers came occasionally to Mr. Daniel Barker's of Little Leigh. Young Janion heard that a Mr. Hampson, an old Methodist preacher, was to preach there on a certain Sabbath morning. The words of

the preacher were as balm to the wounded spirit, and assisted him in his search for the pearl of great price. The only Methodist society then in existence in those parts was at Little Leigh, and it consisted of Mr. D. Barker, Mr. Ralph Kinsey of Gadbrook, Mr. John Lowe, and Mr. Thomas Lowe, and a few others; and young Janion joined the band of these faithful men. Old Mr. Hampson at that time officiated as leader. The members of this little infant church had to walk six or ten miles on every occasion, in order to enjoy the blessings of Christian fellowship. Public services at that time were few and far between. Little Leigh was in the Liverpool circuit, which included Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Warrington, Knutsford, Northwich, and many other places. At that time good service was rendered by a local preacher named Shone, belonging to Northwich.

It was in or about the year 1773, that young Mr. Janion obtained a clear sense of pardon. He was then about twenty-three years of age. It was in this year that the Methodist preachers first visited Frodsham. Sometimes preaching in the open air, and at other times in a cottage. Mr. Janion, although such a very young man, became the leader of a class at Preston Brook; and in the year 1775 we find that he was the leader of a class at Overton, and had about twelve members. Soon after this, he became the leader of a class at Norley, where, largely through

his instrumentality, a chapel was built in the year 1779. This was one of the first chapels in the neighbourhood, and was certainly of a very modest and unpretending description. At that time the New Pale, a large farm on the borders of Delamere Forest, was honoured by being the residence of a Mr. George Pugh, who is spoken of as being a veteran in the Lord's service. He was not only a Christian man, but it is said he did more than any of his predecessors to renovate, reclaim, and cultivate that large farm. Verily, he was diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Mr. Janion and Mr. Pugh became warmly attached to each other, and co-operated very cordially in every good word and work. It was in or about the year 1787, that a new chapel was commenced at Kingsley, and when it was likely to come to grief from the want of funds, Mr. Pugh and Mr. Janion came to the rescue, and completed the building at their joint expense. In those days Mr. Wesley occasionally visited Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, Northwich, Stockport, and Warrington; and though the service was usually at five in the morning, yet strange as it may appear, young Janion was frequently one of his hearers, though in most cases the distance was from ten to twenty miles. He met in consultation with Mr. Wesley and others, as to the then proposed erection of Oldham Street chapel, Manchester. He was also, along with Mr.

Barker, of Little Leigh, and others, the first to propose and aid in the erection of the Methodist chapel in Northwich. This was in 1774, when Mr. Janion was only about twenty-four years of age.

In 1780 he was on a farm in Weston, where he resided about ten years, and as far as we know, he was a good farmer and a devoted servant of God. It was in or about the year 1790 that he removed to Bradley Orchard, near Frodsham. This place soon became very notable as the meeting place of the Methodists for many miles round.

It is said that Mr. Janion was the owner of a bit of land in Frodsham, which he consecrated to the good cause, and upon which was erected the first Methodist chapel in Frodsham. It was then that Mr. Hayes, of the salt works, near Frodsham, appeared on the scene. Mr. Hayes became the subject of divine grace about this time, and became a very earnest and indefatigable co-worker with Mr. Janion and other good men, in the erection of the chapel.

In the year 1800 we find Mr. Janion living at Mouldsworth, where he continued to reside for a good many years. A chapel was erected in that township in the year 1815, he being one of the leading spirits in every good word and work. Methodism now obtained a footing, and the society has con-

tinued to exist, with more or less success, down to the present time.

It was about the year 1820 that he retired from his usual active concern in worldly affairs, residing for a time at Newton, and afterwards at Kingsley, spending his time in visiting the sick, and in other Christian work. If we may judge from the evidence which is handed down to us, we may safely conclude that he was a most excellent and devoted servant, and that he did more than any other man, living or dead, to establish Methodism in Frodsham, Kingsley, Norley, and many other adjacent places.

In or about the year 1830, when he was about eighty years of age, he removed to Chester; he had now become somewhat deaf and infirm, and he spent the remainder of his days in Chester, and during the later years of his life he wrote a short history of Methodism, chiefly giving short biographies of his own relatives and personal friends. He makes honourable mention of some good men and good women who distinguished themselves by holy living in those days. He mentions the name of Mr. John Lea, one of his co-trustees; he also speaks of Mr. Robert Pearson, head surveyor of the forest of Delamere; and his nephew, a young man named Stewart. He also mentions Mr. John Picton, another of his co-trustees, who gave his heart to heaven in his early youth. He also speaks of Mr. Thomas Brown, of

Norley, as a very devoted and good man. He mentions the name of Mr. George Pugh, who, at that time, lived at the New Pale; who opened his house for religious service, and, indeed, it appears that religious services were regularly held at the New Pale for some years. It was a great centre, and it was common for devoted men from many parts of the country, and even from Manchester, to attend lovefeasts and revival services at the New Pale, in those days. These things took place more than a hundred years since. He mentions Mrs. Elizabeth Huxley, as being early converted to God, and living a Christian life for fifty years. She and her uncle, Mr. James Huxley, greatly helped in gathering the society in Norley, and in building the first chapel there. He speaks of his father, and of his grandfather; he also gives an account of his brother-in-law, Mr. Gardner, and also Mrs. Gardner, who was Mr. Janion's sister. He also writes respecting his first wife, and of his sister, Mrs. Nevill, and her husband. He proceeds to give an account of three of his other daughters, Mrs. Phillis Pugh, Mrs. Hannah Pugh, and Mrs. Mary Dudleston. He also writes of his grandson, a Mr. John Turner. He also gives a short account of three neices: Ann, Hannah, and Mary Janion. He speaks of all these people as being very dear to him, and being true disciples of Christ. He proceeds to mention Mrs. Lewis, the

mother of Mr. Lewis, of Godscroft, also Mr. Thomas Lewis, of Netherton, Mrs. Hannah Dodd, of Preston-on-the-Hill. He also mentions the names of three of Mr. Lewis's family, namely, Mrs. Pugh, Mrs. Randles, and Mrs. Nodin, and he says that these had all good Christian experience, and adorned their profession by a holy life and conversation. He proceeds to mention some of his coadjutors: Mr. William Wilkinson, Mr. Philip Olliver, Mr. George Walker, of the Hill, Mrs. Hannah Pritchard, Mrs. Mary Harbridge, of Mouldsworth, Mrs. Parr, Mr. Jonathan Fothergill, Mrs. Ann Powell, of Tarvin, Mr. Williams, of Croxton Hall.

He favours us with all these names, and a few others, and it is quite clear that they were all diligent and laborious in the early days of Methodism in Cheshire. These things took place long before Cheshire was divided into circuits. Mr. Janion's little book was written in the year 1833, only two years before the great and notorious division which took place in many parts of Cheshire. At the time of this division there were among the leading men of Norley, Mr. Thomas Wright, Mr. John Lewis, Mr. Thomas Pickering, Mr. William Gerrard, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Abraham Lewis, Mr. John Humphreys, a venerable old man, who had been in society for sixty years. All these, and many others, were expelled, or seceded and joined the new body,

which was then called the Wesleyan Association. Some of their names will appear elsewhere.

Mr. Janion's son, Charles, became a Wesleyan minister of very good standing. I knew him well, personally. He travelled in the Northwich circuit in the years 1840 and 1841, and worked hard to collect the scattered forces and to repair the mischief which had been done, but he found the loss to be irreparable, and that it would require the toil of a lifetime to repair the damage which had been done in one year, by the ruthless and reckless hand of one of his predecessors.

Old John Martin was a witness of these things. He belonged to the last century. He was born in Frodsham, in the year 1784. At that time there was no such thing as a Methodist chapel in Frodsham, and the Methodists worshipped in a small cottage, and were subjected to terrible persecution. At that time there was a man in Frodsham who kept a ferocious and fighting bear. It entered into his wicked head that it would be rare sport to turn his bear into the Methodist meeting house, in the middle of their service. Martin at that time was but very young, but he well remembered the circumstance that the bear was turned into the meeting house, and the door was closed from the outside, and there was of course a tremendous consternation among the praying people, making sure that the bear would

certainly worry somebody, but as it was in the days of Daniel, so it was on this memorable occasion. The mouth of the bear was shut, and he walked across the room and laid himself down on a sofa, where he quietly lay till the meeting was over. This was one among the many of the instances of the vile treatment that religious people received in those days.

After those days he removed to Whitegate, and afterwards to the neighbourhood of Davenham. He was converted to God about the year 1810, was a member of society, and lived a Christian life for nearly sixty years. He was a teetotaler for forty years, and it is said he had preaching in his house for thirty years. I myself have preached in his cottage in Hartford Lane, more than forty years since. He was remarkable for the constancy of his purposes, and the strength of his faith; and, though only a working man, he had a large Christian experience, and extensive knowledge of divine truth.

A few of the last years of his life he spent in Middlewich, and was familiarly known by a great many Christian people, as "Uncle Martin." A local preacher in Northwich, named Sadler, was well acquainted with him. Just before he died he remarked, "Mr. Sadler is praying for me," and he died almost immediately, in the month of October, 1869, aged about eighty-five years. It is a peculiar

circumstance that Mr. Sadler died on the very same day. Verily, they were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided. I was personally well acquainted with both of them.

My first visit to Frodsham was in the autumn of 1836. I then made the acquaintance of Mr. George Edwards. He was born in the year 1773, and was apprenticed to a ship builder at Frodsham Bridge. When quite young he gave himself to the study of scientific books, and to the solution of scientific problems. In after life he frequently related a remarkable circumstance, which took place at this time. He was perplexed very much as to some important scientific problem, and had studied it for a long time without being able to solve it, when one night, fast asleep, the secret was revealed to him in a very clear and infallible manner. He always afterwards regarded this as a special interposition of Providence on his behalf.

Soon after his marriage, in the later years of the last century, he was induced to attend the preaching of the Methodists, which at that time was at the house of Mr. Joseph Janion, of Bradley Orchard, and it is said, that under a sermon by a local preacher, of the name of Brindley, he found the pearl of great price; he immediately joined the chosen few who had set their faces Zionward. At that time the Methodists in the neighbourhood of Frodsham con-

sisted of six persons, and Mr. Edwards was one of the six. In or about the year 1803, he removed to Sankey Bridge, near Warrington, and at once cast in his lot with the Methodists at Bank Street chapel, Warrington. After some years, he returned to Frodsham, and took the management of a ship building establishment belonging to Mr. W. Hayes, where he remained for twenty-five years.

I may here remark that Mr. W. Hayes was a Methodist of good standing; his name appears as trustee of the Norley chapel in 1809, and he did very much in those days in support of a cause which lay near his heart. On my first visit to the Wesleyan chapel in Frodsham, about fifty years since, there was a tablet affixed against the wall to his memory. He died in 1827, aged seventy-five years.

Mr. Edwards was fortunate in being employed in such an establishment; and it is said that between Mr. Edwards and his master there was never one word of difference for twenty-five years. In the year 1835, there was a serious disruption in the Methodist body in Frodsham, a large portion of the society left in consequence (it was said) of the Methodist Conference invading the rights and privileges of the people.

Mr. Edwards, though of forty years standing, joined the seceders, and when first I knew him, he had been for above two years connected with the

Wesleyan Association. He stood very high as a Christian man, and had maintained through life an unblemished character; he had been a class leader for over forty years. I was pleased to make his acquaintance. Soon after this he was called up to receive his reward, leaving a good name behind him. He died in 1839. Not only did I know old Mr. George Edwards, but I also became acquainted with his two sons, Mr. Thomas Edwards and Mr. James Edwards. They were then both young men, and the friendships then formed continued, without a ripple on the stream, to their last hour.

When first I became acquainted with Mr. Thomas Edwards, he was keeping a shop at Five Crosses. His father, Mr. George Edwards, was then living, but died within a year or two after. Soon after this time Mr. Edwards removed to Northwich, and was engaged for a short time in the ship building business, as his father had been before him. After this he removed to Barnton, where he spent a large part of his life, and where his son now succeeds him. He was prominently connected with the Methodist Free Church at Barnton during all the time that he resided there, and took a leading part in all the principal movements. A small chapel was erected in Barnton in the year 1838, which had long been too small, and insufficient for the society and congregation. In the year 1867 Mr. Edwards was very

energetically and actively engaged in the laudable work of providing a new and much more commodious chapel. The old chapel was made into a Sunday school, and the new chapel was opened for service in January, 1868. The late Rev. W. Reed, then connexional editor, was one of the preachers. It was a great day for Mr. Edwards, and seemed to be something like the consummation of his wishes. Soon after this he gave up business and retired to Northwich, where he was constantly engaged in doing good. In so far as I know, he never took a faltering step during all the days of his pilgrimage. He was constant, earnest, loyal and faithful; having once put his hand to the plough, he never looked back, and it was truly said of him that, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;" and was "Strong in faith, giving glory to God." He died in September, 1875. His widow, the daughter of good Ralph Nixon, of Frodsham, still survives. He was a true and faithful friend of mine for about forty years. The example which he set is still having its effect, and the seed which he and others sowed at Barnton, is still bearing fruit beyond expectation; and the new chapel of twenty years since, which then seemed to be the consummation of his wishes, has been found insufficient, and has been very much enlarged in order to meet the growing necessities of the church and congregation.

He was one of those men of whom it may be said, "He being dead yet speaketh." He is succeeded at Barnton by his son; "May he do worthily, and may his bow abide in strength."

Mr. James Edwards was born in January, 1806, and would be about thirty years of age when I first knew him. He was then in business on his own account, as draper. He was also the owner or part owner of some coasting vessels, and was at that time beginning to do a little business in connection with railways. I had seen him about two years previous to this, and in fact the first time that I saw him was on a platform, in the Congregational church, in Northwich, early in the year 1835. He was one of the five local preachers who attended a sort of reform meeting, and what was called by Mr. Sugden, the superintendent of the circuit, "an illegal meeting." I was present at the meeting, and remember his remarks. He related that a present of a cheese had been made to Dr. Warren. Mr. Sugden regarded this as being rebellious, and had called them a "factious lot," in Frodsham. Mr. Edwards denied that they were "factious," and declared his loyalty to Methodism, and the loyalty of his Frodsham friends. I well remember this part of his speech, but this was not the whole.

A very short time after this he was put upon his trial, in his native town of Frodsham, and the charge

against him was that he had attended and taken part in an illegal meeting. The leaders of the Frodsham society were present on the occasion, and some of them strongly sympathised with Mr. Edwards, and one of them confronted Mr. Sugden, who was the superintendent of the circuit, and charged him with acting contrary to the Bible. The debate and dispute waxed very hot. Mr. Sugden said "I have nothing to do with the Bible;" and one of the leaders present laid his hand upon the Bible, and said "What! have you nothing to do with this blessed book?" Mr. Sugden replied, "No! it is Methodism that I have to do with." He was instantly answered, "Then the Bible is one thing and Methodism another." In point of fact, this meeting, which was a sort of court of justice for the trial of an accused person, became terribly disorderly, and I believe that no verdict of any sort was ever returned, but Mr. Sugden, as chairman of the meeting, and superintendent of the circuit, took upon himself to expel Mr. Edwards, and declare him to be no longer a member of the Methodist society. This judicial decision was followed up. Mr. Edwards' name was removed from the local preachers' plan, and he seemed to have no alternative but to join the Wesleyan Association. These proceedings became the town talk of Frodsham and the neighbouring villages. Many other local preachers, leaders and

members, took his part, and thus was formed the first division in Frodsham, which has continued to this day. His wife was the daughter of Mr. Francis Williams, of Norley. Mr. Edwards soon became a very notable and leading character, and took a lively interest in the formation of the new body.

At that time, Mr. John Faulkner, who kept a boarding school in Frodsham, and was a very gifted and scholarly local preacher, allowed the use of his school for the new body, and services were regularly held there, until their present new chapel was built, which bears the date 1837. I myself have preached two or three times in Mr. Faulkner's schoolroom. This was a time of considerable sensation, and the place was generally crowded with hearers.

I was present at the laying of the foundation of the new chapel, which is called the "Tabernacle." The following persons, George Edwards and his two sons, Thomas and James, John Faulkner and William Faulkner, and William Clarke were also present, besides many others. Mr. Bratt (afterwards of Winsford) was engaged to take charge of the work (without any further contract) and to pay for materials and labour. Mr. Hayes lent his workshop for three months. The chapel was opened in the autumn of 1837. Mr. James Edwards was a young man of considerable ability; was a very bold, declamatory, and out-spoken preacher. He was in the habit of

coming occasionally to Northwich, where he was well received and was very popular. He regularly continued his business as a draper for the long period of at least forty years, and probably no man in Frodsham was better known during his life than was Mr. Edwards. I was personally well acquainted with him, and indeed very familiar with him during nearly the whole of this time. In the year 1835, shortly after his expulsion, he attended the meeting of delegates in the town of Sheffield, and sometimes, in after years, he was elected to represent the Frodsham circuit in the annual assembly. He was not only popular as a speaker, but he also knew how to handle the pen of the ready writer, and was for many years a contributor to various periodicals. He wrote also a long series of letters under the cognomen of "Examiner." These letters obtained wide publicity at the time. He had an excellent library of books, and had a mind richly stored with nearly all sorts of knowledge. As he advanced in life, many of his friends began to think that he was rash, crotchety, and easily offended. He sometimes had serious differences with preachers and other friends, and in some cases the rupture was so great, that they actually parted asunder. If he imagined that any of his religious friends, whether preachers or others, were guilty of any improper conduct, he was so indignant that he really appeared to be very un-

charitable, and sometimes quarrelled with those who might have been among his best friends. During all this time, I myself continued on the best terms with him, and often endeavoured to assuage his anger when he seemed to be more severe than the justice of the case demanded. He contracted the early habit of smoking, which he practised through life, and I have no doubt did himself much physical injury, and when he became advanced in life, he was nearly worn to a skeleton. I mention these things as operating to some extent to his disadvantage, and many others of a similar kind might also be named; but he was nevertheless remarkable for his fidelity to what he believed to be the truth, very honourable and upright in his worldly affairs. His eccentricity seemed to cling to him to the last, and he gave orders that he should be laid in his coffin in a suit of black cloth. Some of his last words were, "'Tis all my hope and all my plea, for me the Saviour died:" and added, "Come, Lord Jesus, and come quickly." He was buried at Overton church in the month of January, 1879, aged about seventy-three years. He had been a local preacher about fifty years. Some particulars of Mr. Edwards, and of his expulsion, will be found in former pages.

Mr. Ralph Nickson, of Frodsham, was a local celebrity in his day. He was born soon after the year 1790, and he joined the Methodist society

about the year 1820. A few years after this he was known to be living the life of a faithful and devoted Christian, and was one of those who have followed the Lord fully. He was a faithful servant of the River Weaver Navigation Company for about forty-seven years, and in that capacity was never known to have committed a fault. In the year 1835 he left the old connexion, and joined the Wesleyan Association. Shortly after this, we find him a member of Mr. Edward Dignum's class, and so continued to the time of his death, which took place in the month of February, 1865. In social position he was never more than a respectable working man, but he was a man of large heart and rare piety; he was remarkable for regularity of his conduct and the firmness of his faith. He died as a Christian, and left a good name behind him. I knew him well for nearly thirty years.

One of the good men of Frodsham was Mr. William Clarke. He was born in Kingsley; his father, Mr. Thomas Clarke, was one of the first Methodists in that neighbourhood. His father was the inventor and patentee of a bottle, well known throughout Cheshire as "the Frodsham bottle," and was largely used by farmers and others for the purpose of rubbing, in all cases of wounds and accidents. It is said that his father realised a moderate fortune by the sale of this article. I knew

the old man well. He joined the Wesleyan Association in 1835. He was a good and faithful disciple, and died nearly half-a-century since. Mr. William Clarke became a true Christian when he was a young man, and was on the plan as a local preacher in the old connexion; he was present at the trial when Mr. James Edwards was charged with attending a reform meeting at Northwich, and was a witness of his expulsion. He joined the Wesleyan Association at that time, and continued as a local preacher to the time of his death, which took place in June, 1846, aged fifty-one years. He had a rare talent for conducting Sunday schools, and in his pulpit addresses he was tender and pathetic. Some years before his death, he removed to Northwich, where he died. His widow was a most excellent woman, well known in the Methodist Free Church. She subsequently became the wife of my excellent friend, Mr. John Irving. She died in 1863.

Mr Edward Dignum, was another of the good men of Frodsham. He was the son of my dear old friend of the same name, of Northwich. His wife was a Miss Williams. Another sister became the wife of the late Mr. John Clarke, son of Mr. William Clarke afore-named; and another, and third sister, Miss Eliza Williams, of the Rock, remained unmarried, and died in 1887. It was said that she became somewhat self-willed, and from some cause not fully known to me,

there was some contention between her and some chapel friends. So far as I can judge, she seemed to have extreme views, and yet, was upright and honourable in her purposes. She was an old friend of mine, and I hope that she is safely landed. Her sister, Mrs. Dignum, died a while previously.

Mr. Dignum was one of our most regular and constant attendants at public worship ; was always ready and able to lead the singing, and indeed, was ready and able to assist in every good word and work. He was all the more esteemed by me, as being the son of my revered old friend, whose name is mentioned in my report of Northwich. He survived his father about two years, and died in May, 1876, aged sixty-six years, and was buried at Overton. His funeral card says, "Singing for Jesus." I have no particulars of his last hours, but I believe that he lived a Christian life.

The vital matter with all of us is not to perplex ourselves at to *how*, or *where*, or *when* we may die, but rather to watch over our lives, and to concern ourselves as to *how* we shall live. The great test will ever be not how we die, but how we live.

There was a small and very poor Methodist society in Kingsley about the year 1785, and three years after, they made a very laudable attempt to have a little place of worship of their own. The principal leaders in the movement were John Frodsham,

Joseph Oultram, and a Miss Ryder. They managed to get the walls up, but their funds being exhausted, they could not put on the roof, and the bare walls stood all winter. On the following spring, Mr. Janion, of Mouldsworth, and Mr. George Pugh, of the New Pale, came to the rescue, and completed it at their own expense, and when they had supplied what I may call "the finishing touch," it was only a very homely affair—rushes instead of boards served for the floor, and the whole place (to those who can see and understand) told the tale of struggling and heroic poverty. And yet, when it was finished, and was proof against wind and weather, these poor self-sacrificing and praying people were as proud of their little temple as if they had built a cathedral.

In this place the Methodists had their early religious services, and I have heard it said that, when the preacher was preaching, the boys were often plaiting rushes. In process of time, however, the rushes disappeared, and they managed to lay down a boarded floor, and after many years the chapel was enlarged and improved, and a gallery put in, and a Sunday school added, and the cause of Methodism gained strength as years went on.

The Primitive Methodists have a chapel in Kingsley which was built in the early part of this century. Kingsley did not, however, escape the effect of the division in the year 1835. The expulsion of Mr.

Edwards, and the other preachers in Frodsham, created a sensation in Kingsley, where some of them were very popular. Application was made to Mr. Joseph Grice, and he consented to open his house for the use of the expelled preachers and their coadjutors. I myself have on some occasions taken part in these services in Mr. Grice's house, nearly fifty years since.

The new chapel at Blake Lees, Kingsley, was built in the year 1843, for the (now) Methodist Free Church. Mr. Clarke, of Frodsham, and Mr. Wright, of Norley, were good friends. The principal men on the spot were Joseph Grice, Henry Faulkner, Samuel Fryer, and William Oultram; and last, not least, among the men of Kingsley, was my old friend Mr. Joseph Nixon, who was born about the year 1788. But little is known of his early life, but when he was quite a young man, probably not much over twenty years of age, he was on the plan as a local preacher, and did a great deal of hard work, and travelled many long journeys in that capacity. He was supposed to have been some relative of the celebrated Nixon, the Cheshire prophet, who lived some centuries ago. He was a plain, earnest Christian man, and was never known to fail in his duty.

In the year 1835 he was supposed to sympathise with the reformers of Frodsham, which was then in the Northwich circuit. Whether he was expelled,

or whether he seceded, I am not able to say, but when the first plan of the Wesleyan Association was issued in May, 1835, he was No. 1 on the list of preachers. It was he who applied to Mr. Grice as above stated, and he took a leading part with his friends in the building of Blake Lees chapel, and was leader and local preacher. He was one of the famous "nineteen" above-named. Our friends of the Establishment (true to her practice) built a State Church in 1850 midway between the chapels.

Old Joseph Nixon was loyally attached to the Methodist Free Churches, and maintained his ground with unswerving devotion. In the early summer of 1863 I received intelligence that he was breaking up, and on the 5th of July I went over to Kingsley on purpose to see him. He was on his dying bed, clean, comfortable, and happy. I had a long conversation with him as to past, present, and future; and in all things he witnessed a good confession. I took leave of him, never to see him again in this world. He died within one week after this, and was buried at Norley. He was a plain, earnest preacher. Nobody doubted his sincerity or purity of purpose, and he was liked everywhere. He was one of Mr. Dodson's right-hand men at Holford mill, more than seventy years since. The following is copied with my own hand from his gravestone in Norley churchyard—
" Joseph Nixon, died July 11th, 1863, aged 73 years.

He was more than fifty years a preacher of the gospel, and died triumphing in the faith."

It sometimes happens under a wave of divine and spiritual influence, when the heart is broken with remorse, and is passing through the throes of repentance, and the spirit is in bitter agony because of sin, I say that at such times strange confessions are sometimes made. Take the following for example, of a woman of a sorrowful spirit exclaiming, "Lord, thou knows what a sinner I am, have mercy upon me, thou knows that I am guilty of murdering my own child." I could give the name and place of this dreadful confession if it were required, but the secret is safe in my keeping, and will never be revealed. I will merely say that this confession was made at a prayer meeting within five miles of Frodsham, and the words were distinctly heard by one or more who knelt at her side.

It was in the year 1837 that I paid my first visit to Helsby, and made the acquaintance of one of the most important men of that village. He was born about the year 1777. I refer to Mr. Samuel Burgess. At that time Helsby appeared to me almost like some foreign country, and though the public turnpike road leads through the village, the whole place appeared to be in a very rough and neglected condition. Farms were practically open to the highroad, which was lined on both sides with all sorts of broken

implements, old timber, heaps of manure, and in fact nearly all sorts of refuse seemed to be laid on the sides of the road for the special delectation of passers-by.

On going among the inhabitants, their conversation, especially in the evening, was generally about thieves, robberies, murders, and burglars. This was a long time before the railway was thought of. Many years before this, a man had been gibbeted on Helsby Hill, for robbing the mail, and this one thing alone supplied a capital text from which the Helsby rustics preached many a long sermon, dividing and subdividing into all sorts of ramifications, and ending in a general recital of robberies, fights, feuds, trials, murders, gibbets, gibbet-irons, skeletons, and horrors, and many a long sermon did I hear on these subjects in my young days, when first I found my way among the ancient Helsbyites.

I myself have a quiet, cool, habit—even in romantic and sensational times—of falling back upon the naked facts, which, for the special satisfaction of the next generations, I will now set forth in plain terms.

In the latter part of the last century, the mails for the north were carried on horseback every day from Chester, through Frodsham, to Warrington. The name of the postboy was John Stanton. In the year 1795 he was stopped on the highroad near Dunham-on-the-Hill, and his mail bags stolen, by a

man named Lowndes, who was on horseback, and who instantly galloped off to the Bear's Paw inn, in Frodsham, where he left his horse at the door, and went in for a glass of beer. In a short time, Stanton the mail boy, who had followed him through Helsby, walked also into the Bear's Paw. The robber, seeing or suspecting that he was identified, slipped away, mounted his horse, which was hung at the door, and galloped down the street of Frodsham, and in one minute he was at Netherton, where he disappeared, and no tidings whatever could be heard of him.

It happened three years after this, that he was playing at skittles in Exeter, more than two hundred miles away, where he was seen, identified, apprehended, and brought to Chester, where he took his trial. The boy Stanton swore to his man, who was convicted and executed, and was sentenced to be gibbeted on Helsby Hill, near the scene of his crime. A large baulk of timber, fifty feet high, was fixed, and was studded with spikes from top to bottom, and the body of the criminal was actually hung in irons on the summit of the hill, as a warning to all others in the like case offending. Notwithstanding all precautions, the body of the criminal was lowered from its high place in the succeeding night, and was taken away, but who did it, or what became of it, must remain a secret, and will not be

revealed. The gibbet-irons were found in a pit some years after. The socket-hole where the gibbet was fixed was plain to be seen when I used to go to the top of the hill some years since.

Lowndes was gibbeted in the year 1798, and in the year 1800, John Stanton, the postboy, married. His only children were two daughters. He died in or about the year 1834, and his widow survived him for more than thirty years, and was for many years housekeeper for Mr. Gibson, of Kingsley mill. She lived during the latter part of her life with her son-in-law, Mr. John Hough, and her own married daughter, at the foot of Overton Hill, and died in or about the year 1867, aged eighty-six years. Mr. John Hough and his wife are both since dead, and my readers may be surprised to hear that the other daughter of John Stanton is still living, and is the wife of my own gardener, and has often heard from the lips of her own father full reports of these things which took place in the last century. So much for these events and their belongings, which have supplied material for many a long tale on many a winter's night, in the village of Helsby, for nearly a hundred years.

When first I walked into Helsby I saw large bills against the walls, headed "The Helsby Association for the Prosecution of Felons." This was somewhat new and alarming to me, and on making inquiry

I found that this association had its treasurer, secretary, and managing committee, and that they were prepared to pursue and hunt down any poor delinquent who should happen to stray into their dominions. In addition to this, it was a common thing to see boards affixed here and there with the ominous words, "Spring guns and man-traps set on these premises."

They showed me a man-trap, which, when opened and set, was about three feet in diameter, with sharp iron teeth, and was calculated to cut off a man's leg just below the knee. One of the good men of Helsby offered to lend me this formidable implement, but the bare sight of it was enough for me, and so I respectfully declined the loan, preferring to be robbed ten times over, rather than make use of such a horrible instrument.

At this time I was young and very inexperienced, and the thought of finding myself in the land of the Philistines was enough to cause a little fear and trembling. It was not long, however, before I found that these terrible things were nothing but the expiring remains of former or feudal days, and that there was no foundation for my fears, but, on the contrary, I found much to love and admire.

I found Helsby to be very charming in some respects, beautifully situated, and a very genial climate. I found the land to be very early, fruitful,

and productive, and I found that the farmers made a special point of growing early potatoes for the Manchester market, for which the soil and climate were very well adapted. The potato harvest was a very exciting time. The people now, with one consent, forgot their accustomed topic for the time, and morning, noon, and night, I heard very little except about new potatoes.

There was no railway in those days, and new potatoes and other produce were carted to the canal at Preston Brook, about four miles, on the way to Manchester market. It was a common thing to see twenty or thirty carts following each other in a caravan, laden with new potatoes. These are some of the particulars which I noticed on my first visit to Helsby, more than fifty years since.

Helsby is a large and populous village and township, in the parish of Frodsham, and had given ample temporal support to the parish church for generations, and yet they had received nothing in return. No school, no church, no service, no religious instruction, and no clergyman had ever lifted his finger, or taken one step to take the bread of life to the famishing people of Helsby.

Mr. Janion tells us that Mr. Burgess, whose name I have previously mentioned, began a Sabbath school in Helsby, in the year 1800. He had made and fitted up a large room in his own farm building, which had

been regularly used for a Sunday school ever since, and was also used for divine service. Mr. Burgess was the first man to begin, and had been the leading spirit in this movement for more than thirty years, and when I first visited the place I found a good flourishing Sunday school, and a numerous congregation at the public services, and there was also a fairly good class of private members in society. Mr. Burgess at this time was vigorously engaged in his good work. He was practically the bishop of the whole place. He took me for miles round to visit the sick and the dying, and he seemed to be the only true and watchful pastor in the entire neighbourhood.

He was a man of some property, and was a standing institution in Helsby. His frank, open, and generous heart and life endeared him to everybody. He was a great curiosity. Seldom travelled beyond the limits of the neighbourhood. He had heard of Northwich, but never was there, and some of his expressions were of a singular kind. When he spoke of the West Indies, where there was a mission, he always gave the name as "West Hinges."

On special occasions it was his practice to invite his friends to anniversary services, and they came far and near. His house at such times was open to all comers, and the different rooms were crammed with visitors, and these special services came to be

regarded as a sort of Helsby jubilee. Mr. Burgess himself, when I was there, did not sit down at any of the tables, but was busy here and there, out of one room into another, to see that all the tables were plentifully supplied and promptly replenished. His activity on these occasions was highly amusing, and his bounty overflowing. It was worth a journey to Helsby to see old Mr. Burgess, and to see the manner in which he displayed his boundless hospitality, without stint, and without respect of persons. Some working-men and their wives got their full share of his bounteous attentions.

I had the great pleasure of visiting Helsby again and again for several years, and always found Mr. Burgess full of vigour and Christian zeal. There is, however, an end of all things; he was taken ill, and died full of faith, on the first of June, 1844, and was succeeded on his home and property by his only surviving son, of the same name as his father: who continued a bachelor all his life. He kept a good deal of company, and was often seen carrying his gun. He was possessed of good means, and was reckoned by all his neighbours as one of the principal men of the village. A new chapel was built in the village in his day; he was a good friend to the cause through his life, but he did not follow the Lord so fully as his father. He would sometimes, in private conversation with his friends, speak of his deep convictions,

and was frequently broken down in penitence, and drank deeply of the wormwood and gall, but it was not until his health began to fail that he obtained a sense of pardon. After the failure of his health, he removed to the house of a relative at Seaforth, near Liverpool. I went over there once or twice on purpose to see him. This was in 1870. I am assured that he died as a Christian. He was buried in the family vault at Helsby, in December of the same year. He was the last of that name, and the last of that family, in that neighbourhood. When I visited him at Seaforth, I found that he was constantly attended during his illness by his faithful friend, Mr. Edward Dignum, of Frodsham, whose name appears elsewhere. I ought to have said that Mr. Burgess took a lively interest along with Mr. Lewis in the building of the present Zion Chapel, and took a share of the labour and expense.

Old Mr. Burgess' second son, John, was a pious young man, and died very young. He had also three daughters; one of them, Elizabeth, was a good girl, and died young in 1846. Another became the wife of Mr. Thomas Brandreth, and is since dead. She was the mother of Mr. James Brandreth, Mrs. Thornley, and Mrs. J. S. Lewis. The other daughter of Mr. Burgess became the wife of Mr. Thomas Arrowsmith; they are both dead. I have spent many happy hours in the company of the venerable

and devoted father, whose memory is still dear to me. He was the first to establish the Sabbath school and public Christian worship in this village, and in fact he was the first man to bear the lamp of life into the villages of Helsby and Alvanley.

In one of my early visits to Helsby, I became acquainted with Mr. Thomas Lewis, senior. He had two sons; Thomas, who lived at the Rakehouse, with his grandmother, and John, who lived at the Cottage. I heard that he was ill, and I went to the Cottage to see him. I was afraid that his illness would terminate fatally, and so it proved soon after. He was quite a young man, and was much lamented. He left a young widow and several children. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Haspell, of Hatley, and was therefore of a good stock. She was also nearly related to other excellent people. At that time, there were several Mrs. Lewis's in Helsby, and to distinguish Mrs. John Lewis from the others, she was commonly called Mrs. Cottage. She was, so far as I know, amiable and pleasant in person, prudent and judicious in conduct, and sincere and devoted as a Christian all her days, and brought up her children as good mothers do. Since writing the above, I hear of her death.

Her father-in-law, Mr. Thomas Lewis, senior, lived with her and managed her farm. He was a very exact and particular man. He was tall, straight and

active, with white hair. When I first knew him, he was very skilful in growing new potatoes, and would sometimes talk about the exploits of his young days, among the thieves, robbers, burglars, and bad characters which one would suppose infested the country in those days. He generally rose about four o'clock in the morning, and was very busy in all directions long before other people. Every trifling thing with him seemed to be very important, and he made it his business never to forget, and never to neglect anything. At that time the Wesleyan chapel in Helsby was a little empty thatched cottage, close to the road, and one of the meanest little buildings in Helsby. Old Mr. Lewis and Mrs. Cottage were the principal support of the place, and though he was strict, fidgety, and fault-finding, yet he was nevertheless a very upright and well-meaning man. He made no very great profession of religion, but was always true and loyal to the cause. With him, like many others, the ruling passion was strong in illness and death. He had a very large garden of gooseberry trees, and the birds sometimes gave great trouble in picking the fruit buds from the trees. When he was on his deathbed, he gave strict orders to scare away the birds from eating the gooseberry buds. A little matter of this sort did not escape his notice. In health and in sickness, his busy head was always employed. Notwithstanding these

strictures, I believe that he lived and died a Christian. It was on the 7th of February, 1857, that I received information of his death, and was invited to attend his funeral, which took place at Overton on the 10th of the same month.

His eldest son, Thomas, long before this time had lived at the Rakehouse. He was then young, and yet he had become one of Mr. Burgess' right-hand men, and was one of the foremost in every good word and work. There was one particular in which he was something like his uncle, Mr. Burgess. His house was open to all comers on special occasions, and the guests which sat at the tables of these two houses were almost sufficient in number to make a good congregation. I must now add a few more words about Mr. Thomas Lewis of the Rakehouse, who, after the death of his brother John, was the only son.

It is said that his grandfather came to live in Frodsham in the year 1790. At that time he found the Methodists worshipping in a cottage, and as he happened to be the owner of a large barn with bay, he with the assistance of the friends, had it made into a temporary chapel, which served for twelve or fourteen years, until a chapel could be built. A further account of the Lewis family of the last century will be found in Mr. Janion's little book.

When Mr. Lewis was a boy of fifteen, or thereabouts, he was at school with Mr. John Faulkner, of

Overton, who was a clever man, and a local preacher, and who kept a boarding school. There was a great religious movement among the boys, some of them were converted, and Thomas Lewis was one of them, and when he left school, he at once joined the class of his uncle Burgess at Helsby, and as we have already seen, he soon became one of Mr. Burgess' right-hand men.

In the year 1835 the division took place, soon after the notable expulsion of Mr. Edwards and others, and Mr. Burgess and almost the entire society and congregation joined the seceders, now known as the Methodist Free Church. Mr. Lewis worked heart and soul with Mr. Burgess, till his death, in June, 1844, after which he took Mr. Burgess' place as leader, which office he held for about twenty-five years, till he left the neighbourhood. He gave the land for the present Zion Chapel, and took a large share of the work and cost into the bargain.

In 1863 he removed to a large farm in Wrenbury, and in 1866 he felt the full force of the terrible cattle plague, and his large stock of dairy cows was swept away in scores. At this time he was one with the Methodist Free Church at Broomhall, and so remained till his death. He was ever true to the cause, and was not crushed by his losses.

He not only lost his stock, but his farm was on his hands without any good result, while the high rent,

rates, and taxes, were all going on as usual. He would have blamed his landlord very much that he refused to share the loss in any degree, and yet he would excuse a little for him by saying that he was more deeply involved in poverty than any tenant he had. Be this as it may, his losses were almost ruinous.

In about three or four years after this he met with an accident which very nearly caused the loss of his sight, besides very great expenses. He had one trouble after another, and it was a wonder that his faith never failed him.

In the year 1879 his habitual activity began to fail, and there were evident signs of failing strength and energy. In March and April, 1880, I went to see him several times, and saw that all was over. I saw him on April 13th for the last time. He was well able to speak with me of his approaching end. He was full of gratitude for home kindnesses and home blessings, and repeated again and again his favourite passages and lines, such as "The Lord is my Shepherd," "In my Father's house are many mansions," "There all the ship's company meet." He died on the 15th, and his last words were, "Jesus my Saviour," "What a Friend we have in Jesus." On April 19th, 1880, his remains were laid in the family grave at Overton, in the presence of myself and my brothers, Joseph, Cyrus, and Samuel,

his sons, and his son-in-law, Rev. Mr. Fennel, Mr. Brandreth, senior, Mr. Arrowsmith, and other dear old friends. His age was sixty-four years.

So ends the mortal career of my brother-in-law, Thomas Lewis, of the Rakehouse, Helsby. It was in the year 1847 that he was married to my sister (who still survives), and for more than thirty years there was one unbroken friendship and intimacy between us. Till his death he was constant in his attachment to all the members of his wife's family, and I believe that there never was in any case a ripple on the stream to disturb the full flow of brotherly love and friendship. It would be easy for me to write a long history of his life and character, but I must not. I may, however, just observe that from the year 1835, when he first joined the Free Churches, down to the day of his death in 1880, a period of forty-five years, he never (so far as I know) made a faltering step, or swerved from his allegiance to the cause of Christ and the church to which he belonged. He had been not only a member and a leader, but he had also been a local preacher for many years.

I remember in my early visits to Helsby, I often heard the name of John Hitchen; he was a poor shoemaker, and belonged to the old Methodists. He had the reputation of being one of the best men in Helsby. I remember that Mrs. Stitt, of

God's Croft, a bright healthy lady in the prime of life, went on a visit to some friends in Liverpool, and was taken fatally ill, and when she found there was no hope she did not send for any clergyman, nor for the reverend dignitaries of any church, but she sent from Liverpool to Helsby for poor old John Hitchen, who proceeded with all speed to Liverpool, and on his devoted knees at the bedside of the dear dying lady, he poured forth his faithful prayer to Him who hath said, "The righteous cry and the Lord heareth," and I have heard it said, that like a "brand plucked from the burning," she was borne to heaven at last, on the faithful prayers of poor old John Hitchen; all honour to the memory of such men.

Old John Hackney deserves to be remembered. He was a farm labourer, and for many years worked for Lightfoots of Barrow. I knew him well. He was a local preacher of the Free Churches. He was not only faithful and true as a Christian, but he was a man of ripe experience and wonderful sagacity, and was well able to read his Bible with a discriminating eye. He told me that Mrs. Lightfoot gave ten shillings to the first little chapel in Barrow, on the distinct assurance that the clergyman must not know. This condition implies her opinion that the clergyman was capable of shameful sectarian hostility; poor old John Hackney deserved well of the churches, such men are not very plentiful.

William Snell, of Barrow, was a good old fellow, and was a local preacher of the old school. Some of my old friends will remember Samuel Massey, of a Wincham family, who became a schoolmaster at Helsby, in my young days. He was a very judicious local preacher, and emigrated many years since to Canada, and took up his residence in the city of Montreal. I have heard of him, and once or twice at least, he has been over to Northwich, where I have seen him after his long absence. I had good reason to believe, not very long since, that his name and his reputation as a Christian minister, were such as to give him a place among the best and most eminent men in that city. He still remains my dear friend, though the wide waters of the wide Atlantic roll between us.

Among many others that I well knew, and whose names deserve to be mentioned, was Mr. Richard Peers and his wife. It was said they had seven sons and seven daughters, all living at home. I saw them regularly in the congregation, but I regret that I never became much acquainted with them. They were the most blooming and good-looking children that I ever saw in any one family. I always felt an interest in them, and they always had my best wishes for their welfare.

I have related frankly a few of the things that I saw and heard on my early visits to Helsby. Many

of the people were very primitive and old-fashioned in their lives and conversation, and my fastidious eyes were not blind to faults and defects, and yet, speaking generally, I was very much impressed with the good that I saw. There was a good number of earnest praying people. I found some praying women among the wives of working-men, and here and there a pious family among the cottages on the hillsides, and when I am writing of a crooked and perverse generation, I do not forget that there was a goodly number whose garments appeared to be unspotted.

In these days Mr. Darlington lived at the Woodhouses, and afterwards removed to Frodsham. His name appears elsewhere. There were very many other persons and things which I knew and saw at Helsby and locality, before the days of the railway, but I must leave it to others to supplement my remarks.

In the year 1837 I paid my first visit to Alvanley, and made the acquaintance of an old disciple, Mr. Joseph Outram, of Alvanley. He was then eighty-six years of age, and had been a member of the Methodist church, and had then lived in peace with God for sixty years. He lived about ten years after this. In relating his experience he would often say, that when he was a young man he was always invited to all the wakes and every meeting in the neighbourhood, for the purpose of playing his fiddle

at the country dances. It was during an interval that he was struck with conviction for sin, and when all were ready to resume their dance they said, "Now, Joseph, strike up," he answered, "No, I have done." His conscience accused him of being the author of all this rabble and wickedness, and when he got home he dashed his fiddle on the house floor, and smashed it into twenty pieces. He now began to pray, and in a few weeks obtained a clear sense of the pardon of his sins. Methodism was then in its infancy. Liverpool, Chester, Warrington, and Northwich were all in one circuit, besides many other places. He had lived for some years at Tarporley, and also some years at Kingsley, and well remembered the early Methodists of these places, and strange tales did he often tell of the heroic work they did, and of the barbarous persecutions they suffered for Christ's sake. It is worthy of remark, that when these things took place there was not one place of religious worship of any sort in Helsby, Frodsham, Kingsley, Norley, or any other place within miles, except Overton church; and yet there are men, and even clergymen, who actually blame the Methodists for taking the light of truth to these dark places, and I may safely say, that had it not been for the Dissenters, there never would have been to this day in all probability, one single church built in any of these long-neglected places.

Norley is a large and scattered township, lying not far from the edge of Delamere Forest, which in the last century was a wild waste, barren and bare for miles. The place had a bad name, it was considered to be the abode of a lot of thieves and robbers; it abounded with alehouses where vile men resorted in order to concert vile measures. There was no such thing as a church or Sunday school, no Sabbath observance, nor any religious service of any sort. The parish of Frodsham was about five miles distant, and the church, while getting all the emoluments of the parish, never took one single step towards supplying this populous place with any sort of religious instruction.

John Wesley said that "Methodism was raised up to reform the Church." There are hundreds of instances in which these words have been visibly verified. There is no doubt that the Church was asleep, and would probably have so remained to this day, had it not been for the fact that the Non-episcopalians were everywhere hoisting their standard in the hundreds of neglected villages, which practically were extra-parochial, and belonged to "no man's land."

This was the state of things in Norley in the year 1776, when the people for the first time in their lives saw a preacher of the gospel; this was a Mr. Gardner, of Tattenhall. He preached in the open air, and of

course he met with the usual reception of brickbats and rotten eggs. He however came again and again, till the winter set in, when a kind farmer gave them shelter till better provision could be made.

The first Methodist chapel in Norley was built over a hundred years since. The land was bought from Mr. Samuel Cliffe of Crowton, yeoman, and the first trustees were Joseph Janion of Bradley Orchard, John Garner of Tattenhall, John Huxley of Cuddington, William Cliffe of Crowton, George Walker of Tarporley, Samuel Firth of Crowton, and William Gibson of Crowton, they are all described as yeomen. The trust deed is dated July 10th, 1779, and the trustees covenant that within three months from that date, they will erect and build a structure, or building, to be used as a meeting-house for so long as the laws and statutes of this realm will admit. Norley is described as being in the Liverpool round, and there is a further provision in the deed, that if the place at any time hereafter cannot be legally used and enjoyed as a meeting-house, it shall be taken down and the materials sold.

Such was the complexion of the legislative brains, and such are the examples of blind stupidity displayed to us as the supreme emanations of "our high court of parliament" in the last century. There has been a great change since then. It is not now judged to be necessary to make provision for the day when the

devouring wolves shall be again let loose upon the praying people. It is not now necessary to provide for the day when the ruffians of the law shall again be in the ascendancy, and when the good people may be compelled to pull down their little humble temple and sell the materials. The days of Bishop Sheldon are past.

After the lapse of thirty years, four of the first trustees were dead, and the survivors were Joseph Janion, William Cliffe, and Samuel Firth. A new trust deed was now made, and was dated in November, 1809, and the new trustees were

JOHN HUMPHRIES, of Norley, *Joiner*.

SAMUEL PICKERING, of Norley, *Tailor*.

THOMAS MINSHULL, of Norley, *Yeoman*.

JOHN PICTON, of Cuddington, *Cordwainer*.

THOMAS WRIGHT, the younger, of Norley,
Corn Merchant.

JOSEPH CHEERS, of Norley, *Yeoman*.

WILLIAM HAYES, of Frodsham, *Merchant*.

JOHN TURNER, of Northwich, *Excise Officer*.

SAMUEL WILKINSON, of Newton, *Farmer*.

JOHN LEA, of Newton, *Farmer*.

JAMES BRADSHAW, of Northwich, *Rope Maker*.

SAMUEL CLIFFE, of Crowton, *Farmer*.

It is now more than fifty years since I became acquainted with some old people in Norley, who could well remember the first old chapel, which in

the matter of architecture was far inferior to the log cabins in the wilds of the far west. Rough trees dressed with the axe served as timber for the roof, which was thatched with straw. There was no floor except the bare earth. Boards for floors, and slates for roof, had not yet been thought of. There was a place where the preacher might stand, but there was no pulpit. The seats for the people to sit upon were rough boards, nailed on the tops of posts, which were set in the ground with the spade. Some of the good people used to get rushes and fern to spread on the floor to keep the ladies' feet dry, and to kneel upon. It is said old William Dutton, of Weston, a collateral relative of the present William Dutton, of Norley, gave a willing hand in this good work. Whether it be a cup of cold water, or a bundle of rushes, if it be given in the name of a disciple, it shall certainly not be forgotten in that day. This little meeting-house had the honour of being the first in Cheshire, except perhaps Chester and Northwich, and was the hallowed ground of the early Methodists for more than fifty years.

Mr. Samuel Pickering was one of the trustees, and after his death, Mr. Daniel Wrench, of Hartford, married his widow. Mr. Wrench was a good and true man, and died a few years since. His very excellent widow still survives. Her mother attended Sunday school in Norley at the beginning of this

century. In the year 1826 there was a new trust deed made, and a number of fresh men appointed, and among these appear about twenty well-known names; and in the year 1848 another deed was made, where we have a list of the trustees who had seceded from the old body, and had joined the Wesleyan Association, now the Methodist Free Church. These are the names who were expelled or seceded in 1835:

THOMAS WRIGHT.

THOMAS MINSHULL.

JOHN LEWIS.

PIERS LOWE.

WILLIAM GERRARD.

JOHN CHRIMES.

GEORGE CROWTHER.

JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

It will be seen from the list of trustees, that Norley was becoming strong in Methodism eighty years since. Most of the trustees had gone over to the majority before my time. Several of them, however, survived, and I knew them well, and the names of others appear elsewhere. I have often heard of old John Humphries, who was a leader of two or three classes, and there was a time in his history when all his members forsook him and fled, and yet he, steady to his purpose, regularly went to his class as usual, and the meeting consisted merely of himself and his great Master. He sang

and prayed, and went home, and this was told to me as a memorial of him. The good old man had learned to

"Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone!"

Norley was in the parish of Frodsham, and yet there was no church and no service whatever (except the Methodists') nearer than Overton, which is four or five miles distant, and this had been going on for generations. It is painful to think of such a state of things.

In addition to the eight persons above-named, there were many leading Methodists who seceded, and joined the new body, and among these were Abraham Lewis and Frank Williams, besides several members of the families of the Chrimes, the Pictons, the Humphries, and others, many of whom I have known personally, and their memories are still dear to me. I wish it were in my power to speak of many of them as they deserve, but my space forbids.

Mr. James Done is remembered with much respect. He was the main support of the cause in its weakest days for about twenty years. He died in May, 1860, aged sixty-three years. I knew him well. His excellent widow is now Mrs. Pickering.

When I first visited Norley, over fifty years since, old Ralph Humphries was among the people. He was of the old stock. He died in July, 1851, having

seen a hundred summers. William Gerrard, of Cuddington, was one of the famous "nineteen," an excellent man, very old-fashioned, and was a marvel of quaint originality. He died in January, 1853, aged fifty-two years. Mr. Thomas Wright, who had been a leading member and trustee of the old place for about twenty-five years, became, in the year 1835, one of the seceders. He was born in the year 1790, and became a true believer about the age of twenty, and held fast his integrity without a faltering step for about fifty-five years, and died in the year 1865, aged seventy-five. There was probably no man in Norley better known than Mr. Wright. He succeeded his father, of the same name as himself, on a large farm, and had also a large corn and flour business in his early days. When he was only twenty years of age he became trustee of the chapel, and he also became a class and prayer leader. His house during all his days was open to the preachers and all good men. He was my dear and personal friend for nearly thirty years. We read of some that are "without fault before the throne of God," and I reckon that my esteemed friend will be one of them. In his early days he was delighted to see and hear Lorenzo Dow, Adam Clarke, William Bramwell, and other worthies. He has now joined them in the better land.

Mr. Wright had a son, John, who was a very

pious young man, and walked in the steps of his father. He died in the year 1861, aged thirty-nine, a few years before his father. I had the privilege of preaching his funeral sermon to a crowded audience, and many tears were shed as I spoke from the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Mrs. Wright was the sister of Mr. John Cartwright, of Cuddington, and survived her husband for some years. She was a blessed woman, and was verily a widow indeed, and died believing in Jesus, in December, 1870, aged eighty-two years.

"O may I meet thee there,

Where thy presence shall not improve my bliss."

In the trust deed of 1848 the eight trustees above-named are spoken of as having seceded from the society, but whether they had literally seceded, or whether they had been expelled, is not certain, as I believe that no reliable record was ever kept of the secessions and expulsions. It is well known that Mr. Sugden expelled right and left, or merely struck out whole classes, in many cases without ever seeing either the leader or the members, and without any semblance of trial of any sort. It is only just, however, to say that there was a general intimation that members might be re-admitted on application. It is very probable that many of the officers and members in Norley seceded voluntarily and peaceably; whether this be so or not, one thing is certain,

that at the end of the year 1835, there were more than nine hundred and thirty officers and members in the Northwich circuit, who had been either expelled or had withdrawn from the society in one year. Solomon speaks of "a man who casteth fire-brands, arrows and death, and saith, Am I not in sport?"

The seceders considered themselves driven to seek shelter elsewhere, and in the year 1836 they built for themselves the present chapel, which is not a hundred yards from the old one. It was opened by Captain Barlow. There is no doubt that there was a good deal of bitterness arising out of these painful disruptions, which continued for a time. Many of the leading spirits of those times, on both sides, have one after another emigrated to that unexplored country whence no return tickets are ever issued, and time, the great healer of many wounds, and the soother of many sorrows, aided by the noble principles of Christian conscience and Christian charity, has healed the last sore; and now the various members of the various Methodist churches have learned to love as brethren, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Verily the set time has come, that "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."

My first visit to Norley was in the year 1836, and I soon became acquainted with most of the principal men of that place, and I often stayed at the house

of Mr. Abraham Lewis, who was really a disciple of the old school, and "an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile." He related to me that he was first brought to a sense of his sinful condition under the preaching of the eminent American, Lorenzo Dow; and stated that in his mental agony, he often retired into the forest of Delamere, where he sought the Lord with strong cries and tears, and it was among the trees of that forest that the love of God was first shed abroad in his heart. The simplicity and honesty of his Christian deportment endeared him to a large circle of friends. His house was a home for the preachers and Christian friends for a generation. I shall never forget the cordial welcome which he and his excellent wife always gave to me.

Few men stood higher in the estimation of all classes than he did. His wife was one of the best of women, and it is not every man who is blest with a wife so pious and so prudent. He died in March, 1844, aged about seventy, leaving an excellent name behind him. He was buried at Weaverham. Another good man in Norley was Mr. William Oultram, the oldest local preacher on the plan; he died in the faith, in May, 1855, aged seventy-one years. It was in those days that I first became acquainted with Mr. Francis Williams; in his younger days he had been in the cheese trade, but had settled in Norley. His house was a home for the preachers for many

years. He died in September, 1851, aged about sixty-two years. His last words were, "They're coming, let us be going." His son-in-law, Mr. James Edwards, of Frodsham, preached his funeral sermon in Norley, taking for his text, "And David's place was empty." He was survived by his sorrowing widow, who was well known throughout the circuit as Mrs. Williams, of Norley. She was really a mother in Israel during her widowhood, her house was ever open to preachers and other Christian friends. She died in May, 1858, aged seventy-six.

Another of my old friends in Norley was Piers Lowe. He had been a trustee of the old chapel, and had been either expelled or had seceded. He was a local preacher. I never remember hearing him except once. His text was, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." I was much interested in hearing him describe the modes and operations of the silver refiners. I remember that on one occasion I was in the pulpit in Norley, when I announced as my text, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." He ejaculated in a loud and distinct voice, "Poor fellow." Everybody in the chapel heard the words, and there was an outburst of laughter throughout the congregation, and I fear that I myself almost laughed in the pulpit. He signed his renunciation as a trustee of the old chapel.

in 1848, and died soon after. "Though lost to sight to memory dear."

I must not forget my old friend Mr. John Lewis, of Norley. He was very well known as a builder. He built the old Methodist chapels of Great Budworh, Pickmere, and Plumbley, and probably others. Mr. Thomas Bratt, of Winsford, lately deceased, who in those days was quite a young man, was Mr. Lewis' foreman, and took the management of the erection of these chapels.

Mr. Lewis' name appears on the plan as a local preacher about the year 1820, when none of the chapels in the present circuit had been built, except Northwich, Norley, and one or two besides. He was in full work as a local preacher in the days of Mr. Dodson at Holford mill, and took a large share in carrying the gospel to the villages far and near.

When the year of bitter memory, 1835, arrived, he does not appear to have taken any prominent part. He was quiet, observant and thoughtful. The news soon reached Norley that nearly all the preachers in Frodsham were either expelled or had seceded, and there is no doubt that he was touched to the quick, and that he sympathised with his expelled brethren. Be this as it may, when Mr. Sugden published his revised plan in May, 1835, the name of Mr. Lewis, like many others, was conspicuous by its absence, and in the same year his name

appears as one of the "nineteen" on the first plan published by the seceders.

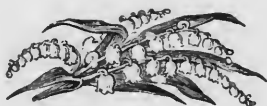
Soon after this he was called to fill an important position on the estate of Mr. Warburton, and he thereupon removed from Norley to Arley, where he resided for the rest of his days. His name, after the death of Mr. Dignum in 1874, stood at the top of the preachers' plan until he died, in or about the year 1881. He maintained his unbroken connection with the Methodist Free Churches to the day of his death, and he also maintained an unbroken connection with many old friends in Norley. He was a thoughtful and judicious man all his days, and so far as I know, held fast his profession as a Christian man to the day of his death, having been a local preacher of unbroken standing for the long period of sixty years.

Before concluding my observations respecting Norley, I must state that the old chapel, which had been practically restored and rebuilt two or three times, served its purpose as a place of religious worship for a little over a hundred years, and having served its generation, it has fallen into other hands and is now a school. A new, and larger, and better chapel has been built in another place. The foundation was laid in 1881, and in due time it was completed, and consecrated by the prayer and faith of devoted worshippers.

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Norley during the ages has done a very creditable share in supplying that good seed, which is called the "Children of the kingdom." I have heard of William Neild as a good man, and his sister Maria, a single woman, beloved and blessed by the sick and dying, also Samuel Neild, who was a local preacher. I must not forget my friend William Willis, farmer, who stood by the cause till he removed to Wharton.

There is a good proportion of wheat, (not yet ripe) still growing in the field. The golden grain will be duly noted after the reapers have received their commands and have gathered in the harvest.



CHAPTER X.



MIDDLEWICH is a small market town, and was a place of some importance in the days of the barons of Kinderton, more than five hundred years since. It has a fine old parish church. I do not find that Mr. Wesley ever preached in the town, nor do I know when the first Methodist society was formed. The first record that has come under my eye is dated in 1798, when Middlewich sent to the quarterly meeting at Northwich the sum of one pound two shillings and sixpence. It is clear from this, that there was then a society in existence.

About this time there was a Mr. Williams, of Coppenhall, who was moved to thoughts of spiritual things under the church minister. He removed from Coppenhall to Croxton Hall, and at once joined the Methodist society, and being a large farmer and a man of some importance, he was a great acquisition to the infant cause.

It is very probable that the little church first began to live in some humble cottage, and it is very likely that it had to struggle for existence until it was joined by Mr. Williams, when it began to acquire strength and vitality. These were the days of the

Rev. Theophilus Lessey, and Rev. Samuel Bardsley, who travelled in the circuit, men whose names were destined to survive; and it was about this time—largely through the exertions of Mr. Williams and a few others like-minded—that the congregation found a resting-place in the little old chapel in Pepper Street, and this was their home and headquarters in Middlewich down to the year 1828.

In the early days of Methodism, there was no such thing as a Sunday school in the town. The Methodists were the first in the field in this particular, and it is within the memory of some now living, that the children of the Sunday school were always taken to church on Sunday morning. To the credit of the old town, I am pleased to place on record the fact that there never was any very brutal persecution, possibly there might be the usual amount of jeering and scoffing, but I have never heard that the preachers were dragged down the streets by the hair of the head or plunged in the canal. I never heard that they killed the prophets or stoned the messengers of peace, and this one good thing—so far as I am concerned—shall stand to their credit.

Old Mr. Williams, of Croxton Hall, seems to have been the leading spirit for many years. The preaching services at Pepper Street were always afternoon and evening, and Mr. Williams was very seldom absent. It is said of him that he was very useful

and exemplary for many years, and that he was a regular and consistent Christian, both in public and in private life. When he felt that his race was run, and his warfare accomplished, he walked—leaning on the arm of a friend—into his little parlour at Croxton Hall where he slept, and in the language of resignation he quietly said, “I am going here to die.” His funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. James Sheriffe, who travelled in the circuit in the years 1819 and 1820. A great impression was made upon the crowded congregation in Pepper Street chapel as they sang—

“Vital spark of heavenly flame!
Quit, oh! quit this mortal frame,
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying;
Oh! the pain, the bliss of dying!”

In these early days a Mr. Pritchard was the superintendent of the Sunday school, and among the teachers were Thomas Shakeshaft, Thomas Sanders, Thomas Dean and others. Old John Sutton, commonly called “Little Sutton,”—whose name appears as one of Holford mill champions, and elsewhere—had an appointment at Pepper Street and was honoured as he said, “for the first time in his life with a fine red pulpit cushion.” Before this he had never preached except in such places as barns and poor cottages.

The church in this place had now lost their old

long-trying and never-failing father and friend, in the person of Mr. Williams, and yet it was a source of immense satisfaction to know that he had not only left behind him an enduring name, but he had also left behind him, as his successor at Croxton Hall, his son Thomas, whose name appears elsewhere. He was a most excellent local preacher, and was also leader and trustee, and probably did more for Methodism in that locality, than any other man living or dead.

The little old chapel in Pepper Street had served the purposes of the cause for perhaps twenty-five years. It had also served as a Sunday school since the year 1804. The time now drew near for a change. Larger and better premises had become a necessity, and in the year 1828 the foundation was laid of the present chapel in Lewin Street. Mr. Williams, following fully in the steps of his father, was ever found at the front in every good word and work.

The new chapel was opened in the following spring, when Rev. Theophilus Lessey and Rev. John Bowers were the ministers on the first Sabbath, and on the second Sabbath Rev. James Everitt was the preacher. He said that the preachers of the former Sabbath had been and had reaped the harvest, and that he was following them as the "weary gleaner."

I may here observe that at this time I was a boy at Cranage school. My old master Mr. Betteley, got

an order to measure the public road from Holmes Chapel to Chelford, and he took me as a lad to carry one end of the chain. When our work was done, the gentleman who employed him asked his charge, when he said, "Half a guinea for myself, and a couple of shillings for the lad." I was the lad, and I got my two shillings; and I believe that this was the first, and also the last money that I ever earned in the shape of wages in all my days. I remember that my old schoolmaster and myself were both wet through. It rained all day, and we were nearly perished. As for myself, I was very well satisfied, I had my two shillings in my pocket, and though I was only a lad, yet I began to look upon myself as a little fellow of some consequence and importance.

On the very next day, about the end of March, 1829, I set out from Holmes Chapel, with my two shillings in my pocket, to the opening of Lewin Street chapel, and to hear the Rev. James Everitt. I heard him speak of himself as the gleaner, and he hoped there was something left for the poor gleaner. His words—so far as I was concerned—were not in vain. I gave one shilling in the afternoon, and the other shilling at night, being the whole of my hard-earned day's wages, and I went home with an empty pocket. I had not a penny left, and yet I did not regret; I had the satisfaction of feeling that I had helped to build Lewin Street chapel; I had acted

like a man, or rather I had acted like the poor widow, I had done my duty, I had given all that I had. So much as to Lewin Street chapel, and so much as to the heart and life of a poor school-boy. This was a grand day for me. They sang "Salvation, oh! the joyful sound." It had a thrilling effect upon my young heart.

The local preachers in Middlewich, when I was a youth, were George Faram, an excellent old man, very tender, and preached very short sermons. James Henshall, a good man with an unblemished name, and well known at the bedside of the sick and dying. His wife was a relative of my own, a true and genuine Christian woman. The memory of them both is dear to me. He died in the month of November, 1846. His widow survived him for many years, and was verily a widow indeed.

There was also Joseph Griffith, and William Griffith (their names appear hereafter), and there was also William Dodd, a gentlemanly man, who filled a good position in a lawyer's office and was very capable. His name disappeared from the preachers' plan in 1833, owing to drink. I saw him many years after this, and found him a miserable wreck. This shall be my last word about him.

Among the good Christian men that I have known belonging to Middlewich, were Mr. John Oakes of Bostock; Mr. John Henshall was a leader and trustee,

and died at Holmes Chapel nearly twenty years since. Mr. James Henshall—already mentioned—not many left like him. He was buried in the chapel yard, amid many sorrowing friends. I must not forget old Randle Scragg, who lived near Ravenscroft Bridge. He was a wonder for life and zeal. He held a position as manager of salt works, and once had his integrity put to the test. He got an order to load some boats on the Sabbath. His master alleged that it was urgent. Randle replied, “I am your servant day and night, twenty-four hours a day if required, but the Sabbath I give to God, and I will work for no man.” “Oh, ! oh !” said his master, “I was not in earnest, I only did it to try you.” He afterwards removed to Tetton. He was a leader for a long time, and was a very faithful man. I knew him well.

In addition to those already named, there was Mr. Samuel Sherwin of Sproston; old Mr. George Percival of Yatehouse, and his son George, both local preachers. There was also another son, James, who kept a shop in the Lower Street, he was an example in visiting the sick, and so also was old William Holford. Nearly all these men belonged to the church in the days of Pepper Street. I knew them all well, but they are not a tenth of those that I have known, both men and women, who well and faithfully served their God, and who lived and died as true

Christians. The memory of some of them is still very dear to me. I ought to mention the name of Mr. John Garnett of Petty Wood. I knew him well. He was a leader at Warmingham for many years, and yet was allied to Middlewich. He died in December, 1869, aged eighty-four years, and was buried at Wybunbury. His funeral card says:

"I've reached at length my native land,
The place I truly love,
Clad in my Saviour's spotless robe,
I've joined the hosts above."

I have a little more yet to say about Mr. Williams of Croxton Hall. He was a large farmer, and paid a high rent. A large part of his meadow and pasture land was near the river Dane, and liable to flood. It happened that the year 1829 was exceedingly rainy, and in the month of August there was a most disastrous flood. The valley of the Dane was one vast sea. The hedges and gates were covered, and the turbulent stream swept all before it. Unfortunately, Mr. Williams was a grievous sufferer. Whole fields of crops were swept away, and his pasture land was covered with mud. He lost a large part of his autumn grass, and his winter's fodder. The following year, 1830, was also a bad season for farmers, who complained bitterly that they were losing money; Mr. Williams was among the number, and in the spring of 1833 he left

Croxton Hall, and removed to a farm in Mobberley, where he remained a few years, and then removed to another farm in Wimboldsley, where he remained for a time, and subsequently went back to a smaller farm in Mobberley, where he spent some of the last years of his valuable life. It was during these last years that he came a time or two to see me at Hulme mill—we had business together. I knew that he was one of the dear old friends of my father and mother. He little knew how proud I felt to welcome him into my own house. I knew that he had suffered heavy losses, and that he had been subject to much trouble. He told me then what I never knew before, that had it not been for the supreme efforts of my father in the year 1827, the Methodist chapel at Holmes Chapel would have been made into cottages. This subject is stated more fully where I speak of Holmes Chapel.

Notwithstanding his troubles, his faith never failed him. He continued faithfully to do his work as a local preacher, until the Master said, "It is enough, well done." There are but few men among us to-day who are worthy to rank with him as a Christian man. I think he died about 1860, I revere his memory. He had a son in the itinerancy, Rev. W. Williams, who died in October, 1865, at the age of forty-eight, and both father and son were laid in the family grave at Coppenhall, near Crewe, waiting the "resurrection

of the just." Behold it is written, "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

The removal of Mr. Williams to Mobberley, beyond the limits of the circuit, was not only a loss to Middlewich, but was also felt to be a loss to the whole circuit. Men like him are too few in every place, and yet there were some good and true men left, who would not willingly allow the cause to languish. They understood the motto that "If God takes away His workmen He carries on His work."

Unfortunately, however, it happened that there were other and very different troubles ahead. In the following year there was a great agitation, which is mentioned more fully where I speak of Northwich, and where a meeting of local preachers and others was held early in the year 1835, and which meeting was declared by the superintendent to have been illegal.

Mr. William Griffith, whose name is previously mentioned, was one of the five local preachers who attended the alleged illegal meeting at Northwich. He lived at Middlewich, and was summoned before the leaders' meeting, presided over by the great little man. Mr. Griffith had heard that Mr. Thompson had been expelled, and he also had learned what to expect. He was a talented young man, but was not skilled in legal lore. He made no great defence.

Every one of the leaders supported him, and pleaded for mercy; but it was all in vain. In less time than it takes me to write it, he heard the fatal sentence, "You are no longer a member of our society." The record of the trial has these words, "Meekly he bore the treatment which he received." I had known him as a local preacher for about ten years. His name at once disappeared from the old preachers' plan, and he was practically forced into the ranks of the seceders, and we find him among the famous "nineteen," whose names appear on the new and first Wesleyan Association plan, which was published on May 10th, 1835.

In the following year, 1836, he was recommended, examined, and accepted for the itinerancy in the Wesleyan Association, and was sent to Todmorden, and he afterwards travelled in Barnsley, Sheffield, Macclesfield, Bolton, Cornwall, Nottingham, and other circuits, and finally was sent to Lincoln, where he finished his course; he died in May, 1862, aged fifty-eight years. His remains were followed to the Lincoln cemetery by the ministers of the various denominations of the city, and great numbers of sorrowing friends. Such is the mortal end of William Griffith, who, most likely, would have spent his days quietly and modestly in his own little native town, had it not been for the great and yet unintended kindness of Mr. Sugden in pushing him into notice.

His funeral sermon was preached by his old and dear friend, Rev. Anthony Gilbert, formerly of Nantwich. One of his sons, Rev. William Griffith, has for many years been a missionary in the Island of Jamaica.

The removal of Mr. Williams, and the expulsion of Mr. William Griffith, were felt to be serious matters in the little town, where the staff of local preachers was not very strong. George Faram was a very excellent and plain old man. His work was done, and he did not long survive these things. James Henshall was in feeble health; much esteemed, but not strong enough for hard work. The only remaining local preacher was Joseph Griffith (not related to William Griffith.) His feelings were strongly opposed to Mr. Sugden, but I am not sure whether he was formally expelled or not. I know, however, that when the coming plan was published in May, his name had disappeared, and in the same month it is found on the Wesleyan Association plan as one of the "nineteen." He kept a shop in Newton, and was a man of good presence, and a good preacher.

The staff of local preachers in Middlewich was almost entirely annihilated by these things, and the memory of these events is nearly extinct. There were at that time more than forty names on the preachers' plan, but they are all gone, and not one of them is left in the entire circuit to give us a history

of those days, or of the events of those times, and "I only"—an outsider—"am escaped alone to tell thee." More than half-a-century has passed since those days, and yet the little town of Middlewich has never, from that day to this, been able fully to recover its lost ground, or to present such a strong and able body of local preachers.

Mr. Joseph Griffith, before-named, not only joined the seceders, as he was almost orced to do, but he, along with others of his brethren, set to work, and soon provided a large upper room nearly opposite to the present cemetery. This room was pewed and fitted up for public worship, and was actually opened by Dr. Warren, morning and evening, and I myself, though very young, conducted an afternoon service.

Service was regularly held in this room for about ten years. Mr. Joseph Griffith was a man of some means. Report said that he had some property left him. Particulars are not known, and yet for some reason or other he left the town. It was said that this was owing to the wishes of his wife, and the necessities of his growing-up children, and that he resided in Birkenhead for a time, and I have often been told that finally he lived and died as a Christian man in the Isle of Wight.

The removal of Mr. Joseph Griffith from the town, which took place in or about the year 1845, coupled

with the removal and death of other friends, was felt to have a crushing effect upon the cause, and in the year 1846 the room was given up; the Sabbath services were discontinued, and the little society was almost, if not entirely extinguished, and this state of suspended animation continued for many years, and in 1847 the name of Middlewich disappears from the preachers' plan of the Northwich circuit.

There is on Newton Bank, Middlewich, an old chapel or meeting-house, belonging to the Quakers or Society of Friends. This place has probably been built about two hundred years, and was not used by that society except occasionally.

In the year 1863, or thereabouts, some of my faithful friends of Winsford, belonging to the Free Churches, fixed their eyes on this old place, and being warmly supported by my old and valued friend Mr. William Darlington, of Stanthorne, they eventually secured it for regular religious service; where the few old friends rallied their forces, and were delighted to renovate and bring into new life the society which had so long been nearly extinct.

Mr. Darlington was a large farmer, and was a local preacher of very good standing, formerly from Frodsham. Mrs. Darlington was a very excellent woman, and they had a number of children who had verily "risen up and called them blessed." Mr. Darlington became leader, and ended his valuable

life in 1874. He was an intimate friend of mine for many years, and his death was a severe blow to the society and congregation at Middlewich.

Mr. William Dale (still living) who had always been a faithful and loyal friend, now became leader, and the society now included the names of S. Pickstock, Thomas Ollier, James Smallwood, and many others. In the year 1882 these devoted friends, aided by many others, and by many friends far and near, succeeded in building a new chapel and Sunday school. The chapel was opened by the Rev. S. Beaven, on August 26th, 1883, and on the following day by the (never to be forgotten) Rev. John Guttridge, who preached in the afternoon, on "Will God indeed dwell with men?" Tea was served in the Wesleyan chapel, and in the evening Mr. Guttridge gave his lecture on "Bible tried and triumphant." I had the honour of being chairman for my old and dear friend on this occasion, and I was told that the proceedings of the day reached thirty pounds. Middlewich has long been in the Winsford circuit.

If it were my purpose, I could easily collect and write a number of amusing incidents. This, however, is not my present business. I will, however, relate the following, which took place more than twenty years since, at Moulton, a few miles from Middlewich. There lived near Moulton, a Mr. Richard Carter,

a man of some little property; he was for some years land agent for Mr. France, of Bostock, and like many others of the same calling, he had the reputation of being worse than his master. The people called him a hard-hearted tyrant. They said that he was a lineal descendant of the immortal Shylock, and that he *would have* his pound of flesh. Many people professed to have received some cruel wrong from him, and they wished him dead. Talk of this sort was very common about Davenham and Moulton, where Mr. Carter lived, and he did not die so soon as his enemies wished. About this time a remarkable incident occurred at a prayer meeting, which shows what was the reigning thought in the breast of a devout worshipper. In his extempore prayer, he said, "O Lord, thou knows how I have been tempted by the devil; O Lord, help me to resist the devil, and do Thou give me power over sin; especially, O Lord, save me from shooting old Dicky Carter. Thou knows Lord, that he richly deserves it, but, O Lord, save me from doing such a thing. Amen." This wonderful prayer meeting became the talk of the country, and is not yet forgotten.

In the year 1835, immediately after the division, the seceders of Winsford wanted land for a chapel. There was a suitable plot for the purpose, and on inquiring they found that the owner lived near Knutsford. I was then living at Hulme mill. My

brother Joseph came over from Woodford Hall to see me on the subject, and we walked together to see Mr. William Ledward, the owner of the land above-named. He was a publican, and kept the Crown inn, in Lower Peover. The great temperance question was then in embryo. We each of us got a glass of beer and entered into conversation with Mr. Ledward, and told him our business. We talked till our glasses were empty, and we got them replenished; we talked and talked till our glasses were empty a second time, and as our business was not yet completed, Mr. Ledward insisted on our having another glass each at his expense, and we were almost compelled to submit to this. We stayed several hours, and drank some little of our third glass of beer. I have hated the sight of beer almost ever since; but the long and short of the matter is this, we bought the land, and came back rejoicing that we had succeeded so well.

The chapel was built, and was opened in 1836, by Dr. Warren. I was present, and remember that his sermon was on Aaron's beard. The subject was novel to me, and I listened with much attention. On the following day, I drove the doctor in a gig to Northwich, to catch the coach to Manchester. We had no railway in those days. At that time Dr. Warren was a man of some note, and I felt it a great privilege to have such an opportunity of getting his

views on many points that we talked over. I did not then expect that his lamp would go out so soon.

Mr. J. B. Sheppard, who had then recently been appointed to the Nantwich circuit, (to which Winsford then belonged) preached in the afternoon. Mr. Sheppard afterwards travelled in Blackburn, Bury and Manchester, and eventually in Scarborough, where he died in October, 1846. One of the first men that I knew in Winsford was Mr. Samuel Edge, this was in 1836. He had then been a true and good man for about forty years, but he sympathised with the seceders. He was unwilling to leave the old body if he could possibly avoid it, and in his perplexity he went to consult his old friend Mr. Edward Dignum, of Northwich. He told his whole case from beginning to end. He had come over on purpose to get Mr. Dignum's advice. They had a long and anxious interview, the full particulars of which are not remembered. The result, however, was as reported to me by Mr. Dignum himself personally. His words were as follows: "Now brother Edge, you have come to me for advice, but I have made up my mind that I will neither say yes or no; I will give you no advice whatever of any sort, good or bad. You must just please yourself, but I will tell you what I would do if I were in your fix." What was said further between them is not known, but Mr. Edge cast in his lot with the

Wesleyan Association, and remained loyally attached for about twelve years after this. He died in January, 1848.

Mr. William Barnes, one of the earliest local preachers of Winsford, died about the same time.

The Swanlow Lane (now Weaver) chapel, was built in the year 1839. Mr. Thomas Bratt was the builder. It was opened in February, 1840, by the Rev. H. Breedon. He preached a stirring sermon from the words, "Whosoever cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." My brother, Joseph Slater, was one of the trustees, and was also a true friend and supporter of the cause at Weaver.

The burial ground here contains the remains of John Ollier, John Foxley, and also of John Wrench, a local preacher, a sensible and true man.

A Miss Elizabeth Picton, of Norley, a pious young woman, sister of Mrs. Bratt, of Winsford, was at the opening service, and within three months after this she was no more, and at her own request, was interred in the burial ground at Weaver chapel, and was the very first tenant of this little God's acre. I myself preached her funeral sermon in Winsford chapel, to a crowded audience. Also in the Norley chapel. She was the daughter of Mr. John Picton, of Cuddington, who was an excellent local preacher. He was also a trustee of the old chapel in Norley, and signed the trust deed in 1809. (See Wesleyan

Association Magazine, 1840, page 401.) One of Mr. Breedon's hearers on this occasion was Mr. Thomas Hulse, an old veteran who deserves to be classed with "the hero of a hundred fights." His name appears elsewhere.

One of the principal men connected with the Methodist churches of Winsford, was Mr. Thomas Atherton. He was born in or about the year 1777. He was a woollen draper and tailor nearly all his life. The literature of his early days was chiefly Nixon's Prophecy, which was read and believed in by the people generally. The only place of worship in that part of the world was the old parish church, about a mile away, and the gospel as preached by the Methodists had never been heard in Winsford. When he was about sixteen years of age, he heard his first sermon from a Methodist preacher. When he was about twenty-two years of age, he consecrated himself to God and His cause. He continued to walk circumspectly before the church and the world, and was in a few years appointed class leader, and his class sometimes reached the number of from sixty to eighty members. In or about the year 1815, he, with Mr. S. Jackson of Winsford, a veteran Christian brother, was placed on the preachers' plan as a local preacher. He had clear views of divine truth, and had a remarkable talent for admonishing and reproving in a courteous and tender manner,

and wherever he went as a local preacher, such was his evident piety and force of Christian character, that he was everywhere made a blessing. His labours were unremitting and extensive for about forty-five years, and he has been heard to say that he walked on an average about six hundred miles a year. At one time, whoever was ill and likely to die, almost the only man everyone thought of was Thomas Atherton, to speak words of hope and comfort to the sick and the dying.

In his early days the Methodists had no certain dwelling-place in Winsford. It was not until the year 1822 that the first chapel was built on Winsford Hill. It was estimated to seat five hundred persons, and was opened on October 2nd of that year, by Rev. R. Newton and Rev. Robert Wood. Collections sixty-four pounds. Our old friend Thomas Atherton had been a local preacher about ten years at this time, and did his level best in rearing the new sanctuary, which in the year 1885 was superseded by another new one, on the other side of the road.

And during his long life he had seen so much of sickness and death, that he seemed to be familiar with both the one and the other, and often said that death had no terrors for him. A counsel which for more than a generation he had constantly given to his class, was to take care and build on a good foundation, and when one of his class came to see

him in his declining years, and asked him how he felt on that subject, his answer was "Oh, I feel that the foundation is good, I have no thorn in my pillow," and when his old friend Samuel Jackson, who had borne with him the burden and heat of the day, called to see him, said "I am ready whenever He should call me, my confidence is unshaken." He died in January, 1859, more than eighty years of age. One of the largest processions ever seen in Winsford on such an occasion was formed, and followed his remains to his last resting-place.

In the year 1835 expulsions and secessions were very numerous, following upon the heels of each other, and I do not suppose that any accurate account was kept. Whether he seceded or was expelled I am not able to say, be this as it may, his name in the same year was on the preachers' plan, where it remained to the day of his death.

One of the local preachers of Winsford was William Hall. He was remarkable as a diligent student of the lives of Wesley, Nelson, George Fox, David Stoner, Samuel Hick, and others, and always seemed to have an impression that these men were great prodigies of divine grace. He died as a Christian, in the month of June, 1870. It is worthy of remark here, that he married the only daughter of Job Hulse, who was a singularly eccentric and unaccountable man in many ways. He was, never-

theless, a man of strong faith and undoubted piety, and died many years ago.

Old Jonathan Beswick deserves to be mentioned. He was born in 1785. He joined the Methodists in or about 1810, but afterwards withdrew, and dealt with a slack hand for some ten years. After this, he joined the class of our old and valued friend, Thomas Atherton. He became a local preacher in or about the year 1835, or shortly after, and as far as I know was earnest and faithful for the rest of his life. He was a waterman, and was in the habit of passing to and fro on his flat between Winsford and Liverpool for the greater part of his life, and he possessed the rare faculty of being able to speak to his brother watermen with great force and clearness, and he often preached to the watermen in the sailors' Bethel in Liverpool. He fell a victim to cholera, and died in September, 1849. His daughter was the mother of Mr. Jabez Hulse, a well-known local preacher.

A small chapel was built at Clive Green in the year 1849, and was opened by myself on the 8th of July in that year. Jonathan Beswick, of Winsford, was a good friend to the little cause at Clive Green, but in less than three months after the opening of this chapel he was called to his reward.

Mr. Joseph Hughes, and his sister Miss Hughes, of Stanthorne, also Miss Ravenscroft, of Lea Head,

were all good friends and supporters of the little cause at Clive, and in about ten years the little chapel had to be enlarged.

There is one man whose name was familiar to the Methodists of Winsford in the early part of this century, and as far as I know, no pen has written one word of his history, but his name must not perish. It will be my duty to tell the young men of this generation that there was a race of men before they were born, or in other words, that there were giants in the land in those days. I refer to old Thomas Hulse, one of the early Methodists of Winsford, and whose Christian life dates from long before any chapel was built in Winsford. I have heard him say that when he was a boy, and when one of the first Methodist preachers took his stand in the street to preach, men, women, and children ran in all directions to see the monster, as Methodist preachers were then regarded, and the sensation was as great as if there had been a murder in the street.

I have no record of old Thomas's early life, nor do I know when he was converted to God, obtaining the pardon of his sins. Considering that he was a poor working-man, toiling almost day and night for about two shillings a day, nearly all his life, he was a great wonder and deserves very honourable mention. He had hard work to save money to buy a Bible and two or three other religious books. When he was

a young man he went far and near to hear the Methodist preachers, who were then "few and far between." In the early years of this century the name of Dr. Clarke was a household word throughout the Methodist Connexion. In the early days of Methodism there were but few men who exercised a more powerful influence, or did more for Methodism than Dr. Clarke. It is said of him that he was not only learned, powerful and eloquent, but he was simple, generous and affectionate, and was much beloved wherever he went. He is still regarded with affectionate veneration by great multitudes in the Wesleyan Connexion. His life was written by the Rev. James Everett. It was in the year 1782 that he was first introduced to Wesley. He then said that he was willing to do and to be what God pleased. Mr. Wesley laid his hand upon the head of the then young man, prayed with him, gave him his blessing, and sent him forth as an early labourer into the vineyard. On one occasion, while preaching in his usual style, he paused a moment, and then with beaming eyes said, "Some of you have seen Adam Clarke before, and some of you have heard of him, and you have been told that he reads many books, but he has to tell you that he never met but with one book in his life that he could hug to his heart, and it is this blessed word of God." He then took up the Bible which lay open before him, and placed it to his

heart, just as a loving mother would clasp her child to her bosom. The effect was electrical, a burst of feeling spread through the congregation; men, women and children wept aloud, and he himself was bathed in tears. All this was simple, natural and touching. Those who wish to know more of Dr. Clarke cannot do better than obtain his life as written by Mr. Everett.

It happened about this time that young Thomas Hulse heard that Dr. Clarke was advertised to preach in Chester on a certain Sunday, and though hard at work till late on Saturday night, yet in the small hours of the Sunday morning he was seen trudging across Delamere Forest, with his old umbrella under his arm, in the direction of Chester. He reminds me of Jacob, who "served seven years for his wife, and they seemed to be only a few days for the love he had to her. So with this poor young Methodist, his journey of seventeen miles to Chester seemed a mere trifle. He heard the Doctor; spent a most happy day in Chester, and walked home at night, making a total of about thirty-four miles, and when he got home after midnight, he changed his clothes and went to his work rejoicing, without one hour of rest.

There is no doubt that folly is food for the fool, and sin is a luxury to the sinner; but there is a region of delight (even in this world) which these men have never explored.

In the Book of Samuel we read, "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." We have heard of pulpits occupied by preachers whose minds are richly stored with divine truth, whose tongues are the "pen of a ready writer," and whose hearts are overflowing with divine love. I will undertake to say, that to a young fellow like Thomas Hulse, or indeed to any other person who is a member of that band whose hearts God has touched—I say that to sit and listen to such a preacher, and to be in cordial sympathy with him, is to drink at the most exquisite fountain of delight that was ever granted to mortal man on earth; and this was the experience of Paul the aged, when he wrote, "I count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of this knowledge."

I do not exactly know when he became a local preacher, but it is well known that for many years he was in the constant habit of taking appointments about Nantwich and the villages beyond, always walking there and back, involving a journey of twenty to twenty-five miles, and going at once to his work on getting home about midnight.

I suppose that he sympathised with the Reform movement in 1835, but am not sure whether he was expelled or not, or whether he voluntarily joined the Wesleyan Association; but so it was, and so he continued to the day of his death. Strange tales are told about him. It is said that on one occasion

when he heard Dr. Clarke (who was an Irishman), that the doctor made use of the expression, "I am an Hibernian, and I have a right to think twice." It struck Thomas that this was a grand saying, and on a later occasion he himself used the same words in the pulpit. One of his congregation spoke to him after the service, and said, "I was not aware that you were an Irishman." He replied, "I'm not Irish." "But," his friend said, "you told us so in the pulpit this morning." "I never did," he said. "But," said his friend, "you said you were an Hibernian, and that is the same thing." "Well, well, well! if that's it, I'm fairly done: I munna do it again."

I remember hearing of a builder applying the plumb-line to his work, and making the remark, "Why it's past perpendicular." So old Thomas was not only punctual, but was sometimes past punctuality. On one occasion, he set out on his long Sunday journey, and when he had walked a dozen miles he met a friend, and discovered that he was a week too soon for his appointment. He stood still for a moment, and then said, "I'll go back; nay, I won't, I'll go on now I'm here, and tell them that I'm coming next Sunday;" and on the next Sunday he was there safe enough.

The first time that I ever saw him was at Holmes Chapel, about the year 1830. He would then be about fifty years of age. His hair was grey and cut

quite short. He looked, in the pulpit, like an old military officer; the hero of a hundred fights, a man who had seen some service. I shall never forget the impression produced, as he read the first verse of the hymn—"Jesus, thou Sovereign, Lord of all." It went through me like electricity. He was blest with an agreeable voice, and spoke as a man having authority, and was much beloved, and much followed wherever he went. Some of the last years of his life were spent at Northwich, and a grant of twelve shillings per week was made to him from the local preachers' fund during his declining days, and no man ever more richly deserved this little charity. I went several times to see him on his death-bed. I asked him if he saw things in the same light now he was near the end. He said, "The same, the same, there is no other name." He died in Leftwich, in July, 1857. He suffered many hardships without a word of murmuring, and did brave deeds without knowing it. Verily, "he endured as seeing Him that is invisible, and his reward is with God." His funeral sermon was preached by Rev. William Reed.

There have been many brave and worthy men and women about Winsford, but the time would fail me to tell of a tithe of them who gave themselves to serve their generation according to the will of God, of whom the greater part are fallen asleep. Of all the men of Winsford and Over, there is probably

not one who more richly deserves a tribute to his memory than my own brother, Joseph Slater, of Woodford Hall, where he had lived for more than fifty years. He might have died a rich man, had it not been for his unbounded liberality. He subscribed to almost everything far and near. He gave, lent, and lost by his benevolence, hundreds, and probably thousands of pounds. He was poor-law guardian for nearly fifty years, and for a long time vice-chairman. He had been member of the Highway Board. He was also, at the time of his death, chairman of the School Board, also of the Gas Company, and was a member of the Local Board. He had been on several occasions mayor of the borough of Over, besides sustaining other offices. We have seen that he took the first step in procuring land for the first chapel after the division in 1835, which was built and opened in the following year. It is well known that he not only did more than any other man, but it is also well known that he took upon himself the principal work of providing the ways and means, and during the long period of fifty years he never slackened his hand. He belonged to the Methodist Free Church, and no man was ever more loyal to his principles, or more faithful to duty. The first tabernacle, which was erected in 1836, did its duty for forty years, when it was found insufficient for the good and rising cause.

First of all a new school was built, which was followed by the present new chapel, built in 1876, and which is one of the best in this part of Cheshire. My brother died, full of years and honours, on July 6th, 1889, and was buried at St. John's Church, Over, amid the sighs and lamentations of the whole town and district. The universal feeling is that a captain of the host has fallen.

While I write of good men, I must not forget the good women whose names are written in the Book. I wish my space would give me full liberty. I will mention one who must not be forgotten. Her name was Elizabeth Adderley. She was my nurse when I was a child. She removed from Gawsworth to Holmes Chapel, and was always treated by my father and mother as one of the family. In the year 1827 she became very religious, and experienced a change of heart. It was at my mother's wish that she took charge of my late brother's household, at Woodford Hall. She refused all offers of marriage. She was a great wonder for her industry, fidelity and excellence of character. Her wages were never high, yet she gave liberally to the Christian cause, bore an unblemished name, lived as a servant in the family for over sixty years, beloved and trusted, left legacies to her poor relatives, with her blessing. Her name will long be remembered. She died at Woodford Hall, in April, 1878.

Whitegate is a rural parish, two miles from Winsford. It has always been in the Northwich circuit. Methodism has had a name and a place here for more than a century, and could always supply a worthy list of good men and good women, who were able to witness a good confession. It is said that the Ark of God rested first of all at the house of Thomas Plumbley; then at Samuel Furnival's of Fox-Twist, and afterwards at John Tomlinson's, and very often (as in ancient times) the Ark rested in the threshing-floor, and God blessed the houses of these men because of the Ark. Last of all the Ark rested at the house of my dear old friend, William Green, and often in his threshing-floor. He died in 1881, aged eighty-four years, and his wife survived him only one year. All these, and many others "came to their graves in full age, as a shock of corn cometh in his season." The first service which I took at William Green's little farm is about fifty years since. Verily "I saw the grace of God among them and was glad."

The faithful church at Whitegate became united with the Wesleyan Association without any great turmoil. I do not hear that Mr. Sugden ever held any court for the trial of his opponents, he simply dropped them all bodily without any ceremony. George Berrington, a true man and a local preacher, belonged here; he was a farmer, and died at

Davenham in the year 1878, in his seventy-third year. The names of William Darlington and Joseph Nixon appear elsewhere. Job Hulse, an eccentric local preacher, a faithful man, died in 1873, aged seventy years. His praying wife followed him across the river in about three years. She was nearly his age. I knew them well. There were also among the praying people here, many whose names deserve special notice. There was William Heatly and his two wives. There was also Ann Heatly of Gale Green. There was also William Challoner. I must especially mention my old and faithful friend John Tomlinson, who went home in 1879, at the age of eighty-seven. His faithful wife had gone before, waiting for his arrival. William Ellis followed them in 1884, at the age of seventy-seven. Devout piety appears to be conducive to health. Many of my old friends about Whitegate seemed in the prime of life at eighty. The Christian society at Whitegate had patiently waited for a half-a-century, in the hope that God would bless them with a little sanctuary where they might enjoy "the communion of saints." A final effort was made by the good brethren Edwards, Lightfoot, and Bate, in the name of the Church. They secured the services of Mr. Joseph Slater of Woodford Hall, who applied to Lord Delamere, the principal land-owner, and to the honour of his lordship be it spoken, he at once granted a site for

the erection of the first chapel in that locality. Since then his lordship has gone over to the great majority, followed by the blessings of the praying people of Whitegate, who hope and believe that he will not lose his reward. This village chapel, which does credit to the devoted band, was opened for divine worship in August, 1878. The entire cost was about three hundred and forty pounds, every shilling of which has been raised, and no debt remains. Since then a new Sunday school has been built, which will soon be out of debt. To my dear friends at Whitegate I say "Well done." They have set a good example. The trustees are Joseph Slater, Samuel Wright, George Dutton, William Ellis, Joseph Ellis, Robert Lightfoot, James Bates, Joseph Potts, Moses Wood, Thomas Billington, Thomas McFall and Joseph Edwards. "The Lord shall count when He writeth up the people that this man was born there."

When I was in my early teens I occasionally went to Sandbach, and have been a few times at all the chapels in the town. I knew Mr. Summerfield, a local preacher of long standing, and some others, before the division of 1835. The Providence chapel was built in the year 1838, and was opened on April 21st in the following year. Rev. John Peters, one of the early Wesleyan Association preachers, an Hibernian of marked ability, was the first man to

occupy the pulpit, and on the following Sabbath the Rev. Robert Eckett, of London, was the preacher. On the following day, April 29th, a large tea meeting was held. The presence of Mr. Eckett drew together a very large gathering, and after tea Mr. Eckett gave us an address on the "Principles of the body." He had a clear head and an able tongue, and his speech was lucid and convincing.

I ought to observe that for two or three years before the chapel was built, the services had been held in the school-room, where I myself had the privilege of speaking in 1836, and in the two following years.

These were the days of old Mr. Ralph Downing, who was one of the pillars of the Church in Sandbach. He was converted to God when he was about thirty years of age, and became a local preacher in 1811. I do not know whether he was expelled in the days of expelling notoriety, but in the year 1835 he became identified with the Wesleyan Association, and his name then appeared on the plan of the new body as a local preacher, in what is now the Winsford and Sandbach circuit. His life is written in the Wesleyan Association Magazine for 1851, and deserves to be seen; he was an example of fidelity, constancy, and earnestness. He was often at Brereton, which was now allied with Sandbach; he died as he had lived, in the faith of Christ, in

October, 1850, aged seventy-one years. His last words were, "I am on the rock, I am on the rock, all is well."

His son, of the same name as his father, was familiarly known as "Young Downing," he was a local preacher of good talents, and rendered good service not only throughout his own circuit, but also in the neighbouring circuit of Northwich. He eventually removed to London, where he died, a good many years since.

These were the days also of George Griffith, a local preacher in Sandbach. I knew him well, he died in 1852, at the age of fifty-six. His last words were, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Mr. Ralph Jepson was one of my dear old friends. He was born at the Duke's Oak farm in Brereton. He had lived in the enjoyment of peace with God for many years, and was remarkable for his constancy, sincerity, and humility; he died in July, 1851.

George Davies was a promising young man as a local preacher; he was a farmer in Bradwell, and died in September, 1850, at the early age of twenty-seven.

Mr. Samuel Frost was another of the devoted local preachers. I knew him well. He died in 1858.

One of the trustees of Providence chapel, was Mr. Mark Poole. When it was my lot to be in

Sandbach on the Sabbath day, I often stayed at the house of old Mr. Cooke, near the chapel. He often spoke to me of old Mr. Sylvester, who was the Congregational minister for forty years, and of Mr. Burgess, the ironmonger, as a devoted deacon. He spoke of Peter Leese, of the Common, as a good and loyal Methodist, and of Richard Hall as a zealous Primitive Methodist. I was personally well acquainted with Mr. Elisha Walker, of Brindley Green, and his brother Daniel, of Bradwall, and with Mr. Pring, of Elworth. These are but a tithe of my old friends about Sandbach, who with few exceptions are gone. The survivors are few. It is written, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?"

George Atkins was one of the faithful men of Sandbach. He died on January 1st, 1848. The Methodist Connexion of the beginning of this century had a most excellent and devoted friend in Nantwich in the person of Mr. John Withinshaw. He was a native of Mere, in Staffordshire, and when a boy removed with his parents into Cheshire. He was shortly afterwards apprenticed to the trade of currier in Hanley. He afterwards removed to Liverpool, and was for a time employed at his trade. It was near the end of the last century when he began regularly to attend the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodists, and joined the Liverpool society, being then nearly thirty years of age.

In the year 1800 he was in business at Betley, and became a class leader at that place. In or about the year 1802 we find him in business in Nantwich. At that time the Methodists held their services in an old Baptist chapel which they hired for the purpose. The entire Methodist society at Nantwich at that time numbered about twenty persons, and though Mr. Withinshaw was now living at Nantwich, he went to Betley, eight miles, every week to meet his class, and this continued until another leader was appointed.

At that time he was associated with Mr. John Smith, and Mr. Richard Horton, who subsequently joined the Wesleyan Association, besides many other good and loyal men. It was at that time that they began very earnestly to think of a new and a better place for religious worship. The land was eventually secured in Hospital Street, and in the year 1808, this chapel was opened for divine service by the Rev. John Gaulter, who was a most remarkable man in his day. This chapel has been the home of the Methodist church in Nantwich from that day to this. The entire cost was over three thousand pounds.

Mr. Withinshaw was the founder of the Wesleyan Sunday school at Nantwich, and filled the office of superintendent until the time of his death. For several of the later years of his life he suffered from weak action of the heart, and finally died in December,

1834, after a loyal and devoted connection with the cause for nearly thirty years. It is reported of him that he died as a Christian. The Hospital Street chapel had been heavily burdened with debt from the beginning. He, however, took a large share of the responsibility, and contributed very liberally all his life.

His son, Mr. John Withinshaw, seems to have been a worthy son of a worthy sire. One of the first things recorded of him, is that after his father's death he subscribed two hundred pounds towards the extinction of that debt which had been a burden to the Methodists of Nantwich for many years.

I was never personally acquainted with him, but I know that his name was a household word among the Methodists of Nantwich, after his father's death, for over forty years, and he died, beloved and regretted, on March 2nd, 1885. When I was engaged in my Sabbath work in the Nantwich circuit, in my younger days, I frequently stayed in the house of my dear old friend, Mr. John Smith, who was for many years a pillar of the old Methodist church in that town. In his young days he served in the army, and was stationed for a long time in Ireland, and received his discharge in the year 1814, and returned home to Barton, near Manchester, where he was born in the year 1786. His first religious impressions were received under the preaching of the Rev. Gideon

Ouseley, an excellent Methodist preacher. Mr. Smith first found his way to Nantwich in the capacity of a book canvasser. This would be in the year 1817, and passing through the street he enquired from a stranger, who happened to be Mr. John Wright, if he knew whether there was a Methodist meeting in the town that night. Mr. Wright said, "Yes, I am going to a class meeting now, will you go along with me?" He replied, "Yes." Accordingly, they both proceeded to the late Mr. Benjamin White's class. The friendship thus hastily formed continued for about fifty years.

Mr. Smith's connection with the Methodist society continued till the secession of 1835. He then joined the Wesleyan Association, and ever took a large share of labour as a Sunday school teacher, local preacher, and class leader, besides being trustee of several chapels in the circuit. He was in the habit of walking to Crewe every Sunday, four miles, to assist in the conducting of the Sunday school. I was personally well acquainted with Mr. Smith for many years. I always regarded him as being remarkably honest and upright in all his transactions. I have frequently stayed at his house, and considered it to be a privilege to have the friendship of such a man, whose main object evidently was to serve his God, and to serve his generation, according to the will of God. He died suddenly in January, 1867, aged eighty.

His death was felt as a great blow to the cause in Nantwich. It is worthy of remark that Mr. Smith was for many long years the personal friend and acquaintance of Mr. Withinshaw, Mr. Penkethman, Mr. Lythgoe, and many others of the good and leading men of the old body in those days. The old Wesleyan chapel in Hospital Street was built in the year 1808, and the Wesleyan chapel at Betley was built in the same year.

Mrs. Smith was a most excellent and cultivated woman, and always received me into her house as if I were an angel of God. She told me that when she was a girl the Methodists worshipped in the old Baptist chapel, in Barker Street. Her father, whose name was Lythgoe, was a local preacher. Nantwich and Congleton were then in the same circuit. Mr. Withinshaw, Mr. Penkethman and Mr. Lythgoe, were then the chiefs of the little cause, which was then struggling for existence. These were the days of the Rev. Gideon Ouseley, a champion in Methodism.

My first acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Smith was about the year 1840. They were both then heart and soul with the Wesleyan Association, and were evidently much attached to each other. She died as a true Christian, July, 1851, aged fifty-six years. Her life is written at length in the Association Magazine, for the year 1853. Much sympathy was felt for her

surviving husband, who seemed to feel the blow very acutely; he, however, survived her for fifteen years.

Mr. Richard Horton was another of the leading Methodists in Nantwich in his day. He was born in Birmingham, about the year 1786. He had a pious mother. After his father's death, the family removed from Birmingham to Nantwich, and he was apprenticed to a shoemaker. It is not exactly known when he first "believed unto life," but it is well known that in or about the year 1806, he became a member of the Wesleyan Methodist society, and married in 1810. From this time to the day of his death, he held his integrity. This was before the present Hospital Street chapel was built, and the Methodists then worshipped in the small Baptist chapel in Barker Street. At that time Nantwich was in the Chester circuit, and in the year 1817 his name stands as a member of a class which had eight members. In those days it was his habit to walk from Nantwich to Manchester, a distance of more than thirty miles, carrying with him samples of shoes of his own manufacture. On his first journey to Manchester he was an entire stranger, and had no idea where to find customers. He prayed for divine direction, and strongly believed that God would guide him. He was led direct to an old-established shoe warehouse, where he succeeded at once in doing business, which soon developed into a large con-

nection, and in a few years after this he became a very large shoe manufacturer, and a man of good social position. At the time of the memorable division of 1835, he sympathised with the principles of the Wesleyan Association, and was expelled from the Methodist society.

He now became a local preacher; and his name appears on the first plan of the newly formed circuit. I became acquainted with him in the year 1837. I remember once, in that year, being present with him at the public service. We sat nearly together, in the middle of the congregation. The preacher in the pulpit was speaking of the evils of bad example, and that men were often trying to entice others into the public-house, when Mr. Horton suddenly interjected loudly and distinctly, "Just to get a glass." This unexpected remark caused not only a titter throughout the whole congregation, but even the preacher in the pulpit fairly laughed. He was well versed in Christian truth, and had a very extensive acquaintance with the teachings of the Bible. His character stood high, and few men commanded more respect. He was trustee of public property, and high constable of the town. He was very loyal to the principles of the Wesleyan Association, and devoted his time and his talents to the great work of doing good. He died in October, 1868, in his eighty-second year. His death created a sensation

in the town, and all felt that a good man had fallen.

I may add he was the friend and Christian brother of the following two well-known men in the Connexion, both of whom were natives of Nantwich, and men who have done credit to their native town; namely, the Rev. Anthony Gilbert, and the Rev. John Cartwright, both of whom have rendered good service as travelling preachers. Mr. Gilbert is still living, and Mr. Cartwright died in the month of February, 1887.

One of my early acquaintances in Nantwich was Mr. Thomas Sawyer. He had been expelled from the old body, and was forced into the ranks of the Wesleyan Association, where for twelve years he adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour. He was valiant for the truth, and died in the faith, in October, 1847. When I first visited Nantwich, a young man named Samuel Corbett was one of the society there. Before his conversion he was fond of cock-fighting, and on one Sunday morning he was on his journey with a fighting-cock concealed under his coat, when he met a local preacher on horseback. It happened that the cock crowed just at the time. His favourite bird betrayed him, and the preacher looked at him as if he had said, "Thy sin has found thee out," and like Peter, he broke down and wept bitterly, and became a new man.

There was something mysterious in his character after this, as if he were endued with the spirit of prophecy. He seemed to be directed by the spirit to go to a village five miles distant, and warn an old friend of his that a serious thing was impending, and would befall him shortly. In about a fortnight after this, his friend dropped down dead. He was a local preacher and leader, and was in health and strength, yet he prophesied that he should die in eight weeks, and strange to say he died accordingly, in January, 1840, aged thirty-seven years. Some of his last words were, "Other refuge have I none." Let the infidel explain these things.

The first place of worship built in Crewe was known for many years as the Earl Street chapel. It was twelve yards long and eight yards wide. At that time it was considered quite a venture to spend money in building a chapel in a place where the people seemed to have only a temporary dwelling-place. This little chapel was opened for divine worship on Sunday, October 8th, 1843, and I had the honour of opening the first place of worship that was built in the town of Crewe.

This chapel served till the year 1859, when it was superseded by a second new chapel, and the second chapel has within a few years been superseded by a third new chapel, which is a very fine building, and is one of the largest and best chapels in the

town. It is written, "The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation." When I was a boy there was no such thing as the town of Crewe. There was here and there a house, probably not twenty houses where the town now stands. It has grown, in my short day, into a town of some thirty to forty thousand inhabitants. It is the great workshop of the London and North Western Railway, whose works extend for two or three miles. The town is now a borough, has obtained a charter of incorporation, and is also the head of a parliamentary division.

In the year 1842 there was neither church nor chapel, nor any place of worship of any denomination. The Wesleyan Association, now called the Methodist Free Church, has the honour of being the first to take possession of the little colony, which then had only a few scores of cottages hastily erected.

I have always had a few dear friends in Crewe. Some of them still live, and some are gone; their names appear elsewhere.

Last of all, I have lost my dear old friend, Mr. Martin Heath, alderman of Crewe. He was at my right hand at the opening of the Earl Street chapel, in 1843, and he never made a faltering step to the last. He was a man of good worldly substance, had filled the office of mayor, was a magistrate of the borough, was ever loyal and true to his God and to

the cause of Free Methodism. He died in a good old age. I attended his funeral, and I was told that such a funeral had never before been seen in Crewe. The road from the chapel, High Town, to Coppenhall church, was lined by thousands, who felt that Crewe had lost one of its best men. His funeral took place on January 29th, 1887.

I was in Nantwich in March, 1885, and drove over to Chorley on purpose to see my old friend, Mr. Thomas Bateman. I had heard that his health was failing, and knowing that he was an old man, I was apprehensive that he might not rally. It was a great privilege to see the old veteran, the hero of many battles. I had a long talk with him. He was born in the last century. When he was about fifteen years of age, he was a Sunday school teacher, and there went forth from his class a lad named John Smith, who eventually became the Rev. John Smith, a man celebrated throughout the Wesleyan Connexion for his great pulpit power and marvellous usefulness. Mr. Bateman became a local preacher in the Primitive Methodist Connexion, in the year 1822, and as I write these lines he still lives an honoured patriarch of that body. Few men have more devoted friends, and great honour will be done to his memory when his work is done, and his warfare is accomplished.

The town of Nantwich suffered terribly from the cholera in the year 1849. The plague raged for

a long time, and many were the victims, and yet it is somewhat remarkable that the number of deaths in connection with the Wesleyan Association was very few. The first death was that of Mr. Peter Crawford, in the month of August, and in the following month his uncle, of the same name, also fell a victim. It is reported of both of them that they died as Christians. I should be pleased to extend my history, but the time would fail me to write of all my old friends, such as Mason, Gregson, Shelton, of Hack Green, Cartlidge, of Broomhall, Furber, of Coole-Pilate, and many others who deserve honourable mention. A history of the town and parish of Nantwich has been written by Mr. James Hall, of Willaston. This history speaks of many remarkable things, and does great credit to its author.

About the year 1740 there was a small religious society at Bunbury; they met at the house of Mr. Evans, the schoolmaster and parish clerk. A lady of the neighbourhood went up to London about this time to visit her daughter, who was a member of the Methodist society, which had then only just begun to exist. When she returned home she told her friends at Bunbury of the great work that was being done by the Methodists. They eventually decided to invite Mr. Wesley to come over and help them. Mr. Wesley responded by sending John Nelson, from Yorkshire.

This first visit of a Methodist preacher occurred about the year 1742, when Mr. Nelson preached his first sermon under a pear tree, which has become celebrated and historic. This took place at or near the house of Mr. Stephen Cawley, in Alpraham.

Mr. Nelson was accustomed to meeting a howling mob, and in this particular he was not disappointed. The sum of twenty-five shillings had been subscribed for the purpose of getting drunk, so that they might be the more brave and courageous in driving him from the place, and they hoped to do their work so effectually that he would never dare to come again.

At that time a Mr. Richard Davenport lived at Calveley Hall. The ringleader of the mob wished to get Mr. Davenport's approval. Mr. Davenport refused to be any party to their proceedings, and replied, "No, by no means; suppose they should happen to be right, and we wrong, what a sad thing it would be to persecute them." The mob was so disheartened by this reply that they allowed Mr. Nelson to finish the service in peace, and the money which had been subscribed was thrown away.

On Friday, October 20th, 1749, Mr. Wesley, on his way from Lancashire, rode through Northwich, and reached Alpraham in the afternoon, where he preached to a large congregation. There was a great awakening. Mr. Davenport invited Mr. Wesley to dinner on the following day, together with Mr.

Stephen Cawley. The vicar of Acton was to have been present, but Mr. Wesley said that he had not the courage to stand to his word. The conversation at Mr. Davenport's lasted three or four hours, and was of a serious nature on spiritual things, and Mr. Davenport was much affected.

A society was now formed, embracing the Methodists of Alpraham, Bunbury, and the neighbourhood. They first met at the house of Mr. Stephen Cawley. They afterwards met at the house of Mr. Sims, and here the Ark rested, and here the little church met to worship God for about fourscore years. After this the service was held for some years in the Sunday school.

There is a farm house in Alpraham called "The Moat House;" it stands about half a mile from the Calveley station, on the line from Crewe to Chester. The following inscription, copied with my own hand, is from a brass plate affixed to a block of stone under the pear tree. "In the year 1749, Rev. John Wesley first preached in the adjoining farm house. In the autumn of the same year, John Nelson preached under a pear tree which stood on this spot. That tree having perished, the present one was planted 4th of March, 1856, by the kind permission of J. Tollemache, Esq., M.P., to commemorate the introduction of Methodism into Cheshire." It is almost certain that the above is a true record of Mr.

Wesley's first visit to Alpraham, and yet it must be observed that the above is *not* the *first* visit of John Nelson. He had preached under the celebrated pear tree about seven years before this time, and also on some subsequent occasions. It is probable that the above is a record of one of the *last* times that Alpraham was honoured with a visit from John Nelson.

Alpraham had been the great gathering ground of the Methodists for seven or eight years before Mr. Wesley came to see the place with his own eyes. Not only had the "Stone-wall" Nelson been there again and again, but there is every reason to believe that John Bennett, Mr. Walsh and William Hitchen, besides many other early celebrities, were often there.

Mr. Wesley preached at Alpraham on Thursday evening, April 4th, 1751, and on the following day, Good Friday morning, he walked to Bunbury church and attended the service, and preached again at Alpraham at one o'clock at noon. In the following year, March 25th, 1752, he was again at Alpraham, and preached to a large congregation. I do not hear that he was there again till April 9th, 1774, when he speaks of his "old friends well-nigh ready for the Bridegroom." He was there again in 1779, and 1780; and on Friday, April 6th, 1781, he paid his last visit to this historic place, and preached a funeral sermon for "Sister Cawley, a mother in Israel." So ends

the record of Mr. Wesley's visits to this cradle of Cheshire Methodism.

It will be found in my former pages that Alpraham was well represented at the first quarterly meeting held at Booth Bank, near Bucklow Hill, on April 20th, 1752, when Chester and Alpraham, each alike raised twelve shillings for the quarterly board.

In the Methodist Magazine, 1825, we have a biography of Samuel Hitchen, of Alpraham; he was awakened under a sermon by William Allwood, when he was about twenty years of age. It is said that the three brothers Sims, Miss Mary Smith, of Tattenhall, and the above Samuel Hitchen, were all admitted into society at the same time, by the veteran John Nelson. Mr. Hitchen, who was in good worldly circumstances, became a leader in 1777, and a local preacher in 1790. He succeeded the Sims, and seems to have been wonderfully faithful all his days. He died triumphantly, December 24th, 1824, aged seventy years.

Since these days, chapels have been built in Alpraham, Bunbury, Tarporley, and many other neighbouring villages, where societies have been formed, which continue to this day. The society at Alpraham has the honour of being looked up to as the mother church. Mr. Richard Cawley was the first class leader in Alpraham, and probably the first in Cheshire. He died in 1783, aged sixty-seven.

His wife, who was one of the Sims family, died about two years before her husband.

The following inscription may now be read on the gravestone in Bunbury churchyard—"Here lies the body of Richard Cawley, who died January 8th, 1783; also Jane, his wife, who died March 30th, 1781, whose lives from their youth were devoted to God." Mr. John Sims, Mr. William Sims, and Mr. Ralph Sims, three brothers, all unmarried, belonged to this primitive church. They had also a maiden sister, Mary, who was one of them. Mr. Samuel Smith, of Tattenhall, was converted about this time, and became an acceptable local preacher. He died in 1777, aged sixty-five.

It would be easy for me to write at much greater length respecting the infancy of Methodism, not only in Alpraham, but also in other places round about, but I must curtail my history. There are many things that I could write respecting Mr. Davenport, of Calveley Hall; also of the Cawleys, the Sims, the ministers of Acton and Bunbury, and of many others, many of whom deserve honourable mention. There are some successors of these families still to be found among us. Mr. Stephen Cawley, the highly-respected agent for Lord Tollemache, has no need to be ashamed of the parent stock. Should any of my readers wish to read and to know all about the remarkable events of these times I must refer them

to Mr. Everitt's work on "Wesleyan Methodism in Manchester and its Vicinity," where they will find many particulars of what were then called the "pear tree preachers," besides many other events, for which I have no room in these brief pages.

Among the places in Cheshire where Methodism obtained an early footing, is the village of Astbury, near Congleton, where Mr. Wesley sometimes visited. He was there in the year 1748, and occasionally afterwards. There was a small society there, and also at the town of Congleton, from those days, but it was more than half a century before the little church found a resting-place. It was not till the year 1807 that the Wag Street chapel was built. It was in or about the year 1834 that I walked from Hulme mill, nearly a dozen miles, to hear the celebrated Billy Dawson, the Yorkshire farmer. His text was about "The New Heaven and the Earth." I shall never forget his sermon, nor shall I forget the thrilling effect which was produced upon the crowded and excited audience. I walked home again well rewarded for my walk of more than twenty miles.



CHAPTER XI.



THE year 1845 will always deserve to be remembered as the year in which the first step was taken in the formation of the Evangelical Alliance. After some informal meetings, the first provisional committee met in Liverpool, in October, 1845. The Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel, Rev. William Bunting, Rev. Robert Eckett, and many leading ministers, and others were present. A large committee was appointed from twenty-three different religious bodies. The Established Church, ninety-nine members, the several Methodist bodies about the same number, the Baptists and Congregationalists over one hundred, the Presbyterians and Scottish Churches about one hundred and twenty, and many other smaller bodies were fairly represented.

The aggregate committee met again in Liverpool in January, 1846. Sir Culling Eardley was in the chair. Some important resolutions were passed, and it was decided to hold a general conference in London, in August of the same year. The committee, consisting of some three hundred ministers and other gentlemen, sat for about a week previously. The great conference opened on August 19th, in Exeter

Hall, and was attended by more than eight hundred ministers, besides other gentlemen. It is said that eighty-seven came across the Atlantic, about fifty from continental countries, many of whom were distinguished scholars and theologians. This great conference sat in convocation for more than a fortnight, and I have no hesitation in saying that they succeeded in perfecting and ratifying an organisation which has done more to destroy sectarianism, and to promote union among professing Christians, than all other means combined since the days of the Reformation.

During the sittings of the conference, the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel, a most eminent clergyman of the Established Church, announced that it would give him great pleasure to meet as many of the members as could conveniently attend at his chapel, to commemorate the Lord's Supper. About two hundred members of the conference met him, and they had a most blessed season.

The second great conference was held in Bristol, in June, 1848. Revs. Dr. Blackwood, Dr. Cox, Dr. Urwick, Sir Culling Eardley, Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel, Dr. Bunting, Dr. Steane, Rev. R. Eckett, Rev. E. Bickersteth, all of whom I knew well, besides Rev. Angel James, and many others. It was decided, among other things, that in future years the annual conference should be held in the month of October.

The Evangelical Alliance now began to undertake the cause of persecuted and oppressed Christians throughout the world. In the year 1852, the case of the Madiari in Florence occurred, when husband and wife were sentenced to the galleys for four years and eight months, because they had embraced the religion of Jesus Christ. This case caused great concern and sympathy, and from that day to this, the poor persecuted Christians throughout the world know that they have an able and never-failing friend in England. They know that the Evangelical Alliance has again and again through Her Majesty's foreign secretary been able to make its voice heard and felt on behalf of the oppressed and persecuted Christians in many foreign lands.

After these things, conferences were held from year to year in different parts of this country.

In the summer of 1857 I heard that a great international conference of the Evangelical Alliance was to be held in Berlin in September of that year. I had never at that time set foot on the continent of Europe, but I was now strongly inclined to attend the great projected conference. A Mr. David Oldham, a silk manufacturer of Macclesfield, and an alderman of that borough, was a member of the Evangelical Alliance. He had been an intimate friend of my father's thirty or forty years before this. It was his intention to attend the great conference, and I made

arrangements to accompany him, and fixed to meet him in London, where I arrived early on Monday morning, September 7th. We reached Dover before noon, and crossed over to Calais; we proceeded by rail via Lille to Brussels and Cologne, where we crossed the Rhine by the bridge of boats. This was the first time that I had ever seen the renowned river. We travelled by the Minden railway via Hanover, Brunswick, and Magdeburg to Berlin, and took up our quarters at the Hotel d'Angleterre, where we found very excellent accommodation.

On the following day I looked through the royal palace, gallery of pictures, etc., and walked about the main streets of Berlin. It was announced that the great conference would open at five o'clock on that evening.

The great garrison church was the place of meeting. Hundreds, and perhaps thousands of notable men from all lands were present, and I was in the midst of them. The meeting opened with the hundredth Psalm, by Mendelssohn. This was sung exclusively by the cathedral choir, who attended for the purpose, by the King's special command, under the direction of their leader, Neithardt. The entire assembly then joined in singing Luther's hymn,

"Eine feste burg ist unser Gott."

In some respects this was one of the most impressive events of my life. The effect was perfectly overpowering.

The Hon. and Rev. Baptist W. Noel, a most eminent clergyman in London, Pastor Fysch, of Paris, and Pastor Kuntze, a court chaplain, of Berlin, took part in the great meeting. On the following day the introductory address was delivered by Dr. Krumacher, a court preacher, of Potsdam. He was a man somewhat small in stature, but possessed considerable force of character. He was followed by several distinguished Germans, and afterwards His Excellency Joseph Wright, minister of the United States to the Berlin court, Dr. Simpson, bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, Dr. Baird, of New York, Sir Culling Eardley, Bart., president of the Evangelical Alliance, Rev. George Smith, of London, and many others. It was a day never to be forgotten.

Among the distinguished men at this conference, I may mention the following : Dr. Patten, of New York, the Hon. Joseph Wright, American minister, the Rev. W. Brock, of London, the Rev. W. Bunting, the Rev. Mr. Dobson, secretary of the Alliance, Sir Culling Eardley, Rev. Robert Eckett, Rev. James Everett, Mr. Thomas Farmer, Wesleyan Connexional treasurer, Matthew Gaunt, a magistrate of Staffordshire, Rev. Carr Glyn, John Henderson, Esq., of Glasgow, Rev. Mr. Rigg, of London, Rev. James Sherman, Blackheath, Dr. Steane, etc., etc.

It was a great privilege to make the acquaintance

of all these men, and very many other eminent men besides.

On the day after the opening of the conference a court messenger arrived in Berlin, from Potsdam. He was received by Dr. Krumacher, and Pastor Kuntze. I myself was present at the interview. He was the bearer of a message from the King, inviting us all to a banquet at the royal residence in Potsdam, and the King had already ordered a sufficient number of saloon carriages to take us all by rail, a distance of about twenty English miles.

We were all pleased to accept the honour of such a royal invitation, and on the day appointed we all decked ourselves, so far as possible, in court dress, and proceeded to Potsdam, where we were sumptuously entertained in the royal palace. The day was fine, and we soon spread ourselves through the enchanting grounds and magnificent apartments of the new palace.

About five o'clock the King and Queen made their appearance in our midst. It was a moment of great excitement, and it was almost impossible to repress enthusiasm. We were all presented to the King by Pastor Kuntze. I was present at the front, and I heard Pastor Kuntze address the King in the following language: "Sire, your Majesty has seen many armies, and many noble and brave deeds have been done by them, but never before has your Majesty

met such an army as the one which now meets your view. An army not arrayed in martial attire, fighting for military glory, but girt with spiritual weapons, and wielding only the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The King replied with evident emotion, and I listened to every word as they fell from his lips. He said: "I have always felt the most earnest desire to promote such union among Christians, and hitherto it has appeared to me almost impossible. The first step is taken, and I rejoice to see it. The first days of the conference are passed with the joy and blessing of the Lord. I trust it will be the same with the rest. My wish and most fervent prayer is that there may descend upon all the members of the conference an effusion of the spirit of God, like that which fell on the first disciples at Pentecost."

His Majesty was attended by the Queen, who walked lame, and by Baron Chevalier Bunsen, who was a great man in his day. A number of ladies were in our company, who had the honour of a presentation to the Queen. Their Majesties remained a long time with the company, walking about the grounds, and when they were about to retire the whole company joined in singing Luther's time-honoured hymn, which is always seasonable in Germany :

"Eine feste burg ist unser Gott."

Their Majesties were evidently taken by surprise at such an outburst of Christian loyalty, and instantly stopped and reverently remained to the close.

It is worthy of remark here that in these very halls, and on these very grounds, Frederick the Great, a former king of Prussia, and Voltaire, the notorious infidel, met in council. It was here that they discussed how to annihilate Christianity. It was here that they took counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed. It was here that those memorable words were uttered, and again and again re-uttered, "It took twelve men to establish Christianity, but the world shall see that one man can destroy it." Frederick the Great has passed away, and so has Voltaire, and there has arisen up another king who knew not and cared not for the French infidel, and the wicked predictions of Voltaire remain, and will for ever remain, unfulfilled.

On the Sunday we had a religious service in the large saloon of the Hotel de Russie. We were honoured with the company of Dr. Merle D'Aubighnie, the immortal historian of the Reformation. He was a man of fine physical proportions, considerably more than six feet in height, and was a giant in more respects than one. I remember the words which he spake; he said, "In the year 1817, I learnt that Germans were assembled at Wartburg, in memory of Luther. At that time I knew nothing of the German

language, but I was engrossed by the words and the works of Luther. I visited his room. I ascended the steps Luther's feet trod, and it was in Luther's prison that I first conceived the idea of writing a history of the Reformation." These words, and many more, he addressed to the Christians of Great Britain.

D'Aubighnie's home was near Geneva, in Switzerland. I had the honour and privilege of paying him a visit four years after ^{his}, when I was staying in Geneva. I regarded it as a great privilege to have made the personal acquaintance of such a man. I stayed about a week or ten days in Berlin, and frequently saw the King drive along the streets, with very little attendance.

On the following week I attended a great military review at Spondau, where I saw the King and the Emperor Alexander of Russia. It was said that about seventy thousand men were on the ground.

On leaving Berlin, I was joined by G. Harrison, Esq., Mayor of Wakefield, and some other friends. We visited Wittenburg, the burial-place of Luther, and stayed for a day or two at Leipzic in Saxony. We then travelled via Erfurt and Cassell to Frankfort-on-the-Maine. We then went down to Castel, and spent two or three days in sailing down and up the Rhine, visiting Coblence, and many other places, and after seeing Mayence and its cathedral, we left via Worms, Homburg and Metz, to Paris.

This was my first visit to Paris. I was surprised on the Sabbath day to see the streets crowded with horses and carts, and to see bricklayers, masons and joiners busy at work, and this was all being done in the public streets. We are bad enough in England, but we do not see this. I visited the Madeline, Notre Dame, the English Church, Wesleyan Chapel, Tuilleries, the Public Cemeteries, and many other places of note. I then came direct home by way of Boulogne, Folkestone and London. Thus ended my first expedition to the continent of Europe.

I now became a member of this organisation, and from the year 1857 I have never failed to pay my yearly subscription, and regularly to take "Evangelical Christendom," which is the organ of the body. I have attended the conferences in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Hull, Leicester, Bath, Ryde, (Isle of Wight), Plymouth, also in Dublin and Belfast in Ireland, and in Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, and other places.

At these great gatherings we meet the most eminent of men of different persuasions from the best Christian churches in all quarters of the world. Any man who is the subject of sectarian bigotry, and who has no real charity with any church but his own, should attend these conferences, and if he is open to gracious influences, he will perceive a divine salubrity in the atmosphere, and he will soon find

a great improvement in his spiritual health and moral vision, and he will return to his home a wiser and better man.

In the year 1861 the great international conference of the Evangelical Alliance was held in the city of Geneva, in Switzerland. For many weeks before the time I made up my mind to attend if possible, and on the last week in August I set out on my journey. I had no companion. I spent one night in London, and on the following day proceeded to Paris via Folkestone and Boulogne. I proceeded from Paris as far as Macon, about two hundred and seventy-five miles beyond Paris. I stayed at the Hotel de l'Europe, and spent the week end at this place. I enquired for the Evangelique Eglise, and attended the Protestant service, which was of course in French. I was very much pleased with the simple Christian character of the service, and with the evidently sincere habits of the people. It was now the 1st of September, and yet the weather was warm, and a great number of the inhabitants were walking about under the trees in the neighbourhood of the river Saone, which skirts the town. The river is broad and shallow, intersected everywhere by gravel beds. I saw that nearly all the boys of the place were barefooted and barelegged, and spent very much of their time in amusing themselves with each other in the shallow stream of this river. I

attended service at the Protestant church again in the evening, a short address was given by a Scotch Presbyterian minister, which was interpreted by a lady for the benefit of the French part of the audience. After the service I introduced myself to the French pastor, and went to his house. He was not able to speak English, but we nevertheless had a long and very interesting conversation in his own language as best we could. I was very well satisfied that he was a man of an excellent spirit, lamenting the sins of his countrymen, and very faithfully and very earnestly trying to spread the blessings of true religion among them. I gave him an English sovereign with my best wishes.

On the next morning I proceeded to Geneva, about five hours by rail, and stayed at the Hotel l'Ecu. I proceeded forthwith to the great conference, which was already opened at the Church of St. Pierre, or St. Peter, otherwise Calvin's Church, which is the great cathedral of Geneva. One of the first men that I met with was Sir Culling Eardley, the president of the Alliance, and one of the most sterling men that I ever knew. He was able to speak well both in English and French. I had not seen much of him since our meeting in Berlin, four years previously. A great number of important subjects were brought under the notice of the conference. We had the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel, Dr. Guthrie, and

other men of great note taking part. I was delighted again to meet with Dr. D'Aubighnie, whom I had not seen since we met in Berlin four years before. He gave us a most vigorous address on the character of the Reformation, and of the reformer of Geneva. He seemed to speak of Geneva as the theological city, and the city of Calvin. I went to see Calvin's Bible, which strangers generally try to see. I found it chained to its place. It happened that the Rev. William Bunting, the son of Dr. Bunting, was staying at my hotel. We became very familiar, and from day to day had long walks on the banks of the lake, and on the banks of the great river Rhone. He seemed to be immensely impressed, and said to me that one of the most impressive sights of Geneva was to see the great Rhone pouring its rushing waters beneath the twenty arches of the bridge. I took the opportunity to have a sail right across the lake from side to side, and I noticed that every stone and pebble lying at the bottom of the lake was visible from its surface, though the water was fifteen to twenty feet deep. On the following Sabbath I heard the Rev. Prebendary Burgess, from London. He gave us a wonderfully wise and judicious discourse in the English church. I also heard the Rev. William Arthur, Wesleyan minister, who gave us an enchanting sermon from Ezekiel xlvi., on "The rising of the waters." After the lapse

of about twenty years, I saw Mr. Arthur again, in Leicester; I reminded him of his sermon in Geneva, and was able to give him the heads of his discourse. Of course he seemed surprised. In addition to the men already named, we were favoured with the company of the Earl of Roden, Dr. Thompson, Dr. Cairns, Dr. Urwick, of Dublin, R. Macfie, Esq., William McArthur, Esq., afterwards Lord Mayor of London, and very many other eminent men, whom it was a great pleasure to have seen and known, and to have made their acquaintance. I must not forget to state that we had among us Dr. Krumacher, from Potsdam, chaplain to the King of Prussia, whom I had not seen since I met him in Berlin, four years previously. On leaving Geneva, I travelled by diligence through Savoy to Chamounix, on my first, and probably my last visit. Chamounix is about fifty miles from Geneva, and lies at the foot of Mont Blanc. The mountains on all sides were covered with ice and snow, called glaciers or *mer de glace*, and yet, down in the valleys fruits and crops of all kinds were growing plentifully. In a meadow in the valley of Chamounix I saw them making hay, while at the other end of the same meadow, the ice and snow were many yards thick. I saw potatoes and other crops flourishing on one side of the road, and ice and snow on the opposite side. In one place, called

the Jardin, about nine thousand feet above the sea, there is a small portion of green earth where the flowers appear in full bloom in the midst of a region of snow and ice. After leaving Chamounix, I rode on a mule, taking my guide, and crossed the great Tete Noire pass, which is said to be one of the most picturesque passes in Switzerland. It is the region of avalanches, and many travellers have lost their lives from their fall. The pass from Chamounix to Martigny is said to be about twenty-two English miles. It was a hard day's work, and I was pretty well tired when I reached Martigny. After leaving Martigny I visited Lausanne, which is situated in a beautiful locality on the north side of the lake of Geneva. I also visited Noyen, the birthplace of the celebrated Fletcher, of Madeley, and came back to Geneva after an excursion of a few days. I found Mr. Denman Smith was doing very good evangelistic work in Geneva. After leaving Geneva, I set out for Italy by way of Chambery, in the direction of Mont Cenis. There are few scenes more awfully grand and sublime than the passes of Mont Cenis. The great diligence road was not made practicable for carriages until the days of the first Napoleon, when some thousands of men were employed for a long time. The road passes through frightful gorges, and sometimes rises to the height of six thousand feet. It is said to be seventy-two miles

in length, and it took us about ten hours to cross this great mountain pass by the mail diligence.

This was my first visit to Turin. I then proceeded to Milan for a day, going carefully over the great cathedral, which is one of the finest in Europe, and is said to have as many spires as there are days in the year. I stumbled upon a priest in one of the cloisters, reading prayers. He was evidently too indolent to turn over the leaves, and had his man for the purpose. I inspected the Magenta battle-ground near the river Ticino, where the Sardinians and French on one side, and the Austrians on the other, had such a bloody struggle three years before.

I then proceeded to Genoa, and after a short stay on the shores of the Mediterranean, which I now saw for the first time, I returned, crossing the Appenines to Turin, and now set my face for home. I crossed the Alps by the same mountain pass, leaving Turin early in the morning, travelling by diligence; and on scaling the Alpine heights of Mont Cenis, I noticed that our mail diligence was drawn by as many as fourteen horses, though I was the only passenger. When I left Turin, the weather was so hot that it was said horses dropped down dead in the street, and yet, within about six hours, on arriving on the summit of Mont Cenis pass, I was in a region of frost and snow, and was nearly frozen to death. After having crossed the

mountains, I took train for Paris, several hundred miles, and after a short rest there, I came by Boulogne and London to my home in Cheshire. So ended my first journey to Switzerland and Italy. I thank God for travelling mercies.

The next great international conference was held in the city of Amsterdam, in the year 1867. On the 23rd of August, myself and late dear wife left home and travelled to London, thence by Dover and Calais to Brussels, where we remained from Saturday to Monday. We then proceeded via Antwerp and Dortrecht to Rotterdam, thence by rail via Utrecht to Amsterdam. Our Dutch friends had fairly surpassed themselves in their great preparations. I hardly ever saw such a gathering of great and good men from all lands. Dinner was served for thousands in the Zoological Gardens. We did not stay more than two or three days, and returned home via Harwich, Cambridge, Peterborough, Sheffield and Manchester. We thank God for all his travelling mercies. So ends another journey to the continent.

In the year 1879 a great international conference of the Evangelical Alliance was announced to be held at Basle, in Switzerland. I decided to go, and on August 25th I set out, taking with me three young lady relatives. We went up to London, thence via Harwich to Rotterdam, and from there we proceeded in stages to Emmerich, Cologne, Bonn, Coblenz,

Mayence, Wiesbaden, Darmstadt and Heidelberg, to Strasburg. We made a stay at each of these places for about a day or so, to see the sights and to visit the spots of special interest. We stayed the week-end in Strasburg, and attended service at the great cathedral, and also at various Protestant places of public worship. We drove round to see the vast fortifications and works of defence around this famous city, and on Monday we travelled through Alsace some eighty miles, to Switzerland.

We reached Basle on Monday evening and stayed about a week, and attended every possible meeting of this great conference, where great subjects were handled by great men in a masterly fashion. To sit and listen to the marvellous and far-reaching addresses of those eminent and excellent men, is one of the greatest luxuries of my life. Here we had the Hon. and Rev. Dr. Bligh, Count Bernstorff, Dr. John Hall, of New York, Dr. Rigg, Dr. Hamilton, Prebendary Anderson, Rev. William Arthur, besides hundreds of eminent men from Great Britain, and all quarters of the world. The consciousness of Christian fellowship, and the heavenly enthusiasm which pervaded the great meetings, were perfectly irresistible. Even the prayer meetings at six o'clock in the morning were attended by more than a thousand persons. I went with Dr. Wilson and other friends to Chrishona, a hill a few miles from Basle.

It is the great training school for Swiss missionaries, where the young men are taught all sorts of work. It is a most superior establishment for preparing the candidates for the great work of leading the heathen into the knowledge of the duties of life, and also into the knowledge of divine truth.

During our stay in Basle we were all invited to a garden party, and were entertained at the house of an excellent friend—Mr. Sarassin, of Riehen. It was a most superb affair. We had also another charming garden party in the suburbs of the city. If any of my readers wish for a full knowledge, they may get the official report of this great conference.

On leaving Basle, we proceeded by rail to see the wonderful falls of the Rhine, at Neuhausen, thence to Shaffhausen and Constance. We visited the house where John Huss, the renowned martyr, was born; also his prison, on a small island on the verge of the lake. We also inspected the great grand hall, where he was tried and condemned.

We then sailed over the great lake Constance, and paid short visits to Wurtemberg, Bavaria and Austria, returning to Romanshorn, Zurich, The Rigi, Lucerne, and back to Basle, after a circuit of four or five days. Before leaving Basle we went to the museum, to see Holbein's "Dance of Death."

We returned through Strasburg to Metz, where we stayed a day or two. We took a carriage and

drove through Longville, and visited the house where Napoleon and his son slept, or rather where they stayed but did *not* sleep, on the night before the terrible battle. We drove over the battle-ground at Gravelotte, and saw the countless inscriptions over the graves of the brave men who lost their lives in the service of their country.

“How sound they sleep, who kept the world awake.”

We visited the chateau, where Bazaine signed the capitulation of Metz—handing over as prisoners to the Germans, three marshals, six thousand officers, and one hundred and seventy thousand men. We walk round the town and fortifications, see the cathedral, the great esplanade, the river Moselle, and other sights of the place, and on the next morning we depart via Thionville to Luxemburg.

We see Luxemburg and its surroundings. We see its dismantled fortifications, its cathedral, its vast bridge across the gorge which skirts the city, and then set out for Brussels, where we stay for a day or two at Hotel de la Poste. We see Hotel de Ville, the King's Palace, the Royal Senate House and Halls of Legislature, the Royal Park, the splendid museum of paintings, where Napoleon is represented as being in the next world, and is supplied with human flesh for food, and human blood to drink. These were his only luxuries in life, and are now his only solace in death. We see the great Theatre Royal, the

Botanical Gardens, the Palais de Justice, and Royal Arsenal. Travel round the Boulevards, see the cathedrals, and depart for Antwerp, and after seeing the sights of Antwerp, we sail for Harwich, and proceed to London and home. Thank God for all his goodness.

The last of the great international conferences which I have had the honour and privilege to attend was held in Copenhagen. I left London on August 28th, 1884, and sailed across the German Ocean to Hamburg. Several ladies and gentlemen who were members of the Evangelical Alliance, were bound for the same destination as myself; among these was Dr. Hoge, the pastor of a church in Richmond, in Virginia, a very able and excellent man. It happened that we had on board a very self-sufficient infidel. He professed to be a Cambridge man; he ridiculed the idea of miracles, which he said were "unthinkable," as being contrary to the law of gravitation. I soon found that he was not able to hold his own. He then turned to another matter, and said how foolish we were to suppose that the genealogy of men went back no further than the pretended days of Adam and Eve. He believed that his ancestors had existed in the world for millions of years, and he told us that he was a believer in the doctrine of evolution. I make no great pretensions, and yet I soon found that this learned collegian was hardly worthy of my

steel. He admitted that there is a human race, and that they exist and live. I asked him where we came from originally. "Oh," said he, "we came from a former race." "Yes," I replied, "and where did the former race come from?" "Oh," said he, "from a very inferior race originally." "Yes," I said, "and where did the very inferior race come from?" He tried to escape, but I held him to the question, when he said, that "no doubt we came originally from the very lowest form of animal life." "And pray tell us," said I, "where the very lowest form of animal life came from?" When he was fairly forced to say "I don't know," this reply was received by a significant smile by those round the tea table, who saw that it was a case of "*argumentum ad absurdum*." I told him that he would never find the truth with his dark lantern, and that if he wanted light he must go to the source, and that the farther he went in his present direction, and the darker he would become. My new and able American friend, Dr. Hoge, thought that the logical brain of my opponent was sadly beneath his pompous pretensions, and that he did no great credit to that inferior race from which he believed he had originally come.

In my arguments with sceptics I never find it necessary to begin by declaring the sacred Scriptures to be inspired and infallible. Such a declaration not only narrows the real and vital issue, but it also

brings out the list of arguments which are the general stock-in-trade of the sceptic, relating to discrepancies and apparent contradictions in the sacred volume. I merely state as my ground-work that I will for the purpose of my argument regard the Bible as the best, and the only really authentic and reliable history of the world, and that the apparent contradictions of the sacred writers serve to strengthen, rather than to weaken the authenticity of their writings. No two historians, either ancient or modern, are found to agree in every particular. Their very differences serve to confirm, and not to destroy the genuineness of their histories; whereas a perfect harmony through and through would lead to the suspicion of collusion.

My present purpose is not to argue with the sceptic, who always takes care to avoid the direct issue, and flits about hither and thither to the ends of the earth. In my few debates with the infidel, I always find that if he be held to the point, whether it be history, revelation, miracles, biology, geology, or other science, he is never really able to maintain his ground. Enough for the present on this subject.

After landing at Hamburg, we proceeded through Holstein to Kiel, which is a port on the Great Belt. We took steamer to Korsøer, several hours, and thence to Copenhagen, where we arrived on the Saturday night. I was at the English church on the

Sunday morning. The service was taken by my old friend Prebendary Anderson, of Bath (since dead.) I took my seat on a wooden bench in front of the pulpit, between two gentlemen, little thinking and little noticing that I was seated between two Lord Mayors of London—the then Fowler, and his predecessor McArthur. I noticed that during prayer these distinguished men on my right and left both knelt down on the bare boards.

The preacher on this occasion gave us an excellent sermon on the words, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” He related an incident of a youth who had received as a lesson, and was required to write an essay on the words “*Labor omnia vincit.*” He applied to his great-uncle, Bishop Thurlow, who was then near his end. The bishop gave the youth his aid, and added with his dying breath, “*Amor omnia vincit.*” These words gave a forcible illustration to his subject. The Rev. Prebendary told me that he was preparing for publication a work on “The unique grandeur of the Bible.” The work has not fallen under my eye, and I am not sure whether he lived to publish it.

I met at Copenhagen some old friends, Dr. Schaff, Dr. John Hall, Dr. Underhill, General Field, and a host of others that I had not seen for some years. We had many marvellous meetings, and I had the honour of taking a very humble part in some of

them, and a very good and gracious influence seemed to pervade all our gatherings, and Christian love appeared to beam in every countenance.

At one of our great meetings in the Bethesda Hall, we were honoured with the presence of royalty. According to previous intimation, punctually at seven o'clock, the King and Queen of Denmark, the King and Queen of Greece, the Crown Prince and Princess, and other royalties with their suite walked right into the great meeting, and took the seats which were set for them on the level floor, only a few paces from where I sat. The Ex-Lord Mayor of London (McArthur) presided, and touched most beautifully on the relationship now subsisting between Great Britain and Denmark. Spoke of the affectionate welcome accorded to our Princess Royal ever since she set foot on English soil. The whole of the royal party were evidently touched by this very cordial allusion to such a beloved member of the Danish house. A shower of blessing attended the withdrawal of the royal party, who had stayed in our midst for nearly two hours.

During my stay in Copenhagen, we had an excursion to Roskilde, some twenty miles. This is the ancient capital of Denmark. We see in the side chapels of the Cathedral, marble and other figures of many ancient sovereigns, and in one case the devil is in special charge. We are sumptuously entertained

in the Botanical Gardens, where we have some religious services, and conclude with a concert in the Cathedral, returning to Copenhagen about nine o'clock. I spent some hours in seeing the museum and other principal sights. I took steamer and paid a visit to Sweden for a short time. After all these things, I began to wend my way homeward, spending a day at Hamburg, and then crossing the German Ocean to London, and home, thankful to God for all His goodness to me.

It was one of the dreams of my life, from my young days, that at some time or in some way or other, I would if possible see with my own eyes the Holy Land, and the old city Jerusalem. This desire and purpose never left me. I read of the land and of the places which are so full of thrilling interest, especially to all Christians; but no amount of reading, nor hearing, nor study of maps, nor anything else would ever satisfy me except a personal acquaintance and a personal inspection of the historic places which had ever been so sacred in my eyes. In the year 1874 the long-looked-for opportunity arrived. I was engaged for some weeks in setting my house in order. I had not been very well for a year or two, and my late dear wife judged that a visit to the eastern countries might restore me. I made my will, and with tears of parting tenderness, and with my best blessing, I set out on my journey.

I should have been glad to have had a congenial companion, and I advertised in the public papers in this view, but did not succeed. I set out all alone. I took my ticket in London, sailed across the Channel from Newhaven to Dieppe, and proceeded by rail to Paris. This line of railway crosses and re-crosses the river Seine. We pass Rouen on our way, and reach Paris on the Saturday evening. This was three or four years after the memorable days when Germany had constructed an invulnerable circle round the city, and when all France lay prostrate at the feet of the victorious Germans. I went to the Catholic service at Notre Dame, and also to the Madeline. I also witnessed some remains of the havoc which was caused by the mad people in the days of the Commune, when Paris was governed by the mob.

I was assured on the best official authority, that there are cities in France where there is not one medical man, and I was amused to learn that the public health was the best, and the rate of mortality the lowest where there are no doctors. There are professional men who pretend that the breath of our nostrils is in their hands! What will they say to this?

We leave Paris on Monday night, February 16th; we pass through the notable Mont Cenis tunnel, and after a railway journey of some twenty-four hours

we reach Turin, the capital of Piedmont in Italy, where I had not been since 1861. It happened now to be the great Carnival. I never before saw so much folly, fun, and frolic crowded together, and yet I saw very little drunkenness.

On the next morning we set out for Venice, passing Milan, where I had been some years previously, and also passing some cities of importance; we reached Venice in about twelve hours. This is, literally, a city in the sea. No streets, no horses, and no vehicles of any sort. I went to the top of St. Mark's tower, where I got a vast view of the Adriatic. I looked through the palace of the Doges, the museum, saw many other objects of interest; witnessed the old institution of feeding the pigeons in the grand square; inspected the canals, which serve as streets, and the gondolas which serve as carriages, and then departed for Padua and Bologna.

On arriving at Bologna I met with Dr. Punshon, and Dr. Gervase Smith at the same hotel. We were all bound for Rome. Little did I think at that time, that in a few years I should be reading the epitaphs of them both in City Road chapel, in London. Bologna is a city of wonders. Its university is eight hundred years old, and it has one of the most valuable libraries in the world. I could not stay to see half of the remarkable sights of this city.

Myself and the two gentlemen named proceeded to Florence, about eighty miles. This is one of the most charming of the Italian cities. It is situate on the beautiful river Arno. I walked probably for miles about the river and the city. I went through the picture galleries, which it is said, are not equalled in the wide world. In one of the great libraries here, there are the original manuscripts of Virgil, Tacitus, Plutarch, Dante, and many others. After seeing everything in my power, I set out for Rome, which is about two hundred miles from Florence.

I reach Rome after a railway journey of some twelve hours. I stay at Hotel Allemagne. On the Sunday morning I attend service at the American church, where Mr. Doughall of Florence is the preacher. I called to see him in Florence, but he had gone to Rome. Dr. Punshon was there. Mr. Doughall and myself paid a visit in the afternoon to the Pincio Hill, where we have a capital view of the city, and of St. Peter's, and great numbers of other objects. I attended a very interesting service conducted by Van Meter, an American missionary, and in the evening I heard Mr. Pigott, the Wesleyan minister, on Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

On Monday I cross the renowned Tiber by the bridge of six arches. The Castella, designed by

Michel Angelo, who it is said, designed almost everything that is great and exquisite in Italy, is just opposite. In a few minutes I am in the great piazza in front of the gigantic cathedral, compared to which St. Paul's in London seems as a little child. I paid two or three visits to the gorgeous fabric, but must not attempt particulars.

I stayed a few days in Rome, and worked hard. I saw, and measured the Colosseum. I saw the Forum, and walked along the Appian Way to Saint Sebastian church. I visited the Catacombs, and the Quirinal. I saw the spot where it is said Peter was crucified, head downwards; also where Paul was imprisoned. I looked over the old city walls and saw the "Sancta Scala," or Holy Stairs. I repeated my visit to St. Peter's, and saw the Inquisition Hall, the labyrinth, and the gardens of the Vatican. Walk round the fortifications on the Leonine side, cross the Rotto Ponta, and visit the English cemetery. I hear Dr. Punshon preach in Rome, and we are together at St. Paul's church, and see the sepulchre of the great apostle. Time would fail me to tell of the objects of interest in Rome, and these are not a tithe of what I saw in and around the Papal city, which has a population of about three hundred thousand. On leaving for Naples I pass for some miles through the ruins of Rome, which tell plainer than words of the days of former greatness.

I stay a few days in Naples. My hotel fronts the magnificent bay, which seems ten miles across it. I went to the Catholic cathedral, and saw little boys of some ten summers confessing to the priests. I counted forty priests at the altar all at once, with books in their hands, and their eyes gazing around, saying prayers for men who (I was told), had been dead five hundred years, and who had left their estates to the Church in trust, and on condition that prayers be said for them daily for ever. I saw a priest and expressed my surprise, when he coolly replied, "Oh! they are fulfilling the trusts. These priests are no doubt the lineal descendants of the men "who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers."

When in Rome I met with a Canadian gentleman, a Mr. Hugh Wilson, a government surveyor, and we kept company for a few days. We drove together to see the ruins of Pompeii, some seven miles. This once rich and wicked city was destroyed some eighteen hundred years since, by a shower of hot ashes from Mount Vesuvius. The streets were filled to the heights of the houses, and the people perished after the fashion of the Sodomites. The work of excavation was going on when I was there. Some main streets and public buildings were cleared. It was perfectly awful to see the fine houses, the immense theatres, the marble pillars, the great courts

of law and legislature, the bare walls only standing. Here were to be seen parapets and doorsteps, hard worn by ten thousand footsteps, all conspiring to tell us of a generation of men that have been dust and ashes these eighteen hundred years. My journal of what I saw in Pompeii would nearly fill a book. Those who wish to know all about this place, its museum, and its marvels, may get the information elsewhere.

Among the places of interest in the vicinity of Naples, is Mount Vesuvius. The mountain itself is very prominent and plain from the city and the bay, and indeed from all the surrounding country. We took a carriage some few miles, passed through the old village of Rosina, to what is called the Hermitage. Here we engaged donkeys, and rode, winding our way through beds of broken lava, to the foot of the mountain. The ascent of the mountain itself is enough to tax the endurance of the strongest man. I approached the verge of the great crater till I saw cracks beneath my feet. The fumes are always rising from the boiling liquid lava beneath, and the crater serves as one of earth's safety valves, and affords vent for the vast accumulations of the interior of the globe. This burning mountain, taken in connection with its power of destruction and death, is enough to fill the mind of a stranger with terror and dread. I get back to Naples safe and sound,

having seen some of the most marvellous sights of my life.

I part with my Canadian friend, who returns to England, and I am again without any companion. I take my berth on board a Rubatini steamer, bound for Alexandria. We had a rough sea. We sailed close by the island of Ischia, which to my admiring eyes, as seen from the deck of the steamer, seemed an earthly paradise. I then little thought that in a few years it was doomed to be destroyed by an earthquake. After two nights and a day we reached Messina, where we stayed for a few hours. We then set sail for the wide waters of what in Scripture is called the Great Sea. We made three fruitless attempts to get away, and thrice the surging sea and the howling tempest flung defiance in our faces, and after many hours of hard fighting with the storm, we again and again ran back, like a whipped dog, into the harbour of Messina. This gave me an opportunity of landing and visiting the island of Sicily, where I saw the burning mountain of Etna.

We made a final attempt, and at length got fairly out to sea, and after losing sight of the coast of Italy, we were for a full day and night "driven up and down in Adria." We then sighted the coast of Greece, and in another day we sight Candia or Crete, which seems like one vast mountain chain from end to end, and all covered with snow. On my second

Sabbath at sea, I wished to have a religious service on board, but not being very well, and the sea rough, and all on board being ignorant of my language, I do not attempt it; I read the lessons, and also St. Paul's voyage to Rome, and spend the Sabbath as well as I could. After a sea voyage of some ten days, we sight Alexandria, and take a pilot on board. He was a genuine Arab; barefoot and bare legged, seemed to know his duty well, was very obsequious, and bowed down to me (after the eastern fashion) as if I had been a prince.

The moment we cast anchor in the harbour of Alexandria, we are surrounded by scores of boats, manned by Arabs. I never saw such a scene and such a scramble. I stood on one side, quietly surveying and studying Arab life, which I had never seen in its native character before. It seemed to me to be another world. When most of the boats had got their cargo, and had pulled away for shore, I got a boat to myself, and landed more comfortably than any of them, and was soon in a sort of 'bus, which set me down at my hotel in the great square, which, it was said, had no equal in any country. At that time I little thought of the rebel Arabi, and still less did I think of the demolition and destruction that would in a few short years come upon the superb buildings which surrounded the grand square of Alexandria. "Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

It was early morning when I got to my hotel, and after breakfast I sallied forth to see all objects of interest. I look over the places of worship, see Cleopatra's Needle, Pompey's Pillar, and many public buildings; go through the Arab market, and study Arab life. Witness the arrival and departure of caravans of camels, receive and write letters, and then I set out for Cairo, one hundred and thirty miles, by rail.

Cairo is the ancient capital of Egypt. I lose no time in idleness, I set out sometimes walking and sometimes driving; I see Joseph's well and taste the water. I see the cemetery of the Mamelukes, the tombs of the Caliphs, the Arab market. I also see old Cairo and Joseph's granaries, the Nileometer, the island of Rhoda, where Moses was found, and very many of the chief objects of interest in this old oriental city.

I go through the grand Mosque, where there are five thousand glass oil lamps suspended, every one of which is lighted in their holy month (August), when no good Mahometan either eats or drinks till sunset. I am not allowed to go through holy places with shoes on. Here is the gorgeous tomb of Mahomet Ali, about ten yards square and ten yards high, all richly gilt. It was at the palace adjoining, where the horrible Mameluke massacre occurred, some seventy or eighty years since. Here is the

open ground where every year the great caravan pilgrimage to Mecca is marshalled and sets out. I attend some Mahometan services, and also some revival services of the dancing dervishes. I pay another visit to Joseph's great grain stores, which are supposed to be the identical. The walls, four feet thick, seem to be built for eternity. It never rains in this country, so these great warehouses require no roof.

I am joined on the next morning by Dr. Keene, a clergyman of an Episcopal church in America. He passed as a learned doctor, but he admitted that he did not know one word of any language except English. I had the honour of acting as interpreter, especially in Latin and French. We agree to drive to see the great Pyramids, some ten miles. We are preceded by an Arab runner, after the ancient practice, as if we were dukes of Edom. His agility and endurance were wonderful, but I paid him off, and did not accept his services for the whole journey. The road from Cairo to the pyramids is the only good road that I saw in Egypt. We cross the renowned Nile by a monster bridge of about six arches. The road nearly all the way is lined by large trees, which serve as an acceptable shelter in this warm climate.

We reach the Pyramids, the magnitude of them is not realised from a distance. The great Pyramid

of Cheops stands on about ten acres. It may be ascended on all four sides by the steps, which are each about two feet in height. I managed to reach the top by the aid of four Arab dragomen. The perpendicular height is said to be nearly two hundred yards. I get a grand view of the Nile, and of the great African desert. After spending an hour in solemn contemplation of all these awful surroundings, I had to come down from this giddy height. The descent was fearfully perilous. My Arab guides professed great regard for my safety, but I soon found that they had a much more special regard for my pocket, which they succeeded in making lighter to the extent of an English sovereign. As I naturally wished to get a glimpse of everything, I was taken on my hands and knees in a dark tunnel for some two hundred yards in the soft dry sand. By the light of some dirty tallow candles I saw some of the dismal apartments of the interior, but not being charmed by the places, I had no wish to remain longer than was necessary for my purpose.

After seeing the Sphinx, and other singular wonders, we returned to Cairo the same evening. On the next morning I proceed to see (what are called) the lions of Cairo. I made every inquiry, and so far as possible, I saw English churches and schools, went through some bazaars, and spent some time in the Egyptian museum at Boulac. This

museum in some respects surpassed everything that I had previously seen. There are here numerous relics of pottery, statues, and other articles of very high antiquity; and I saw manuscripts of the Pharoahs, which are said to be five thousand years old. I almost felt myself to be an antediluvian. After another hard day, I had the honour of dining with some distinguished travellers, among whom was Lesseps, the great French engineer, and the builder of the Suez Canal. At these oriental hotels no female servant is ever seen. My housemaid was a little black fellow, wonderfully expert and clean, and did me more honour and obeisance in one week than I get in England in a whole year.

Before taking my leave of this country, I ought to say a few words on the subject of the marvellous skill and scientific knowledge of the Egyptians in ancient times. Evidence of their wonderful learning and profound research is visible on all sides to this day. It is said that Abraham taught them the use of figures, and instructed them in the art of calculation.

It is probable that in some departments of knowledge we are more advanced than the Thebans, who lived one thousand eight hundred years before Christ, and yet in some other departments of useful knowledge we are left far behind.

In these ages, the astronomical, chemical, and

mechanical knowledge were in some respects far greater than our own.

They made glass in great profusion, also burning glasses and lenses for glasses. They must have cut their delicate cameos by the aid of the microscope.

Ptolemy describes an astrolabe—they calculated eclipses—they said that the moon was diversified by sea and land. They give us the length of the lunar day, and the diameter of the earth as compared to the moon. They also give us the cubic mass of the earth as compared to the moon. All these things show good instruments.

Their workmanship in gold as recorded by Homer, and their golden clock-work, by which thrones moved, must have been exquisitely ingenious. They possessed the art of tempering copper tools, so as to cut the hardest granite with the most minute and brilliant precision. This art we have lost.

We see the sculptors in the very act of cutting the inscriptions on the granite obelisks and tablets. We see a pictorial copy of the chisels and tools with which the operation was performed. We see the tools themselves. (There are sculptors' chisels at the British Museum, the cutting end of which preserves its edge unimpaired, whilst the blunt extremity is flattened by the blows of the mallet.) But our tools would not cut such stone with the precision of outline which the inscriptions retain to

the present day. Again, what mechanical means had they to raise and fix the enormous imposts on the lintels of their temples at Karnac? Architects now confess that they could not raise them by the usual mechanical powers. These means must, therefore, be put to the account of the "lost arts." That they were familiar with the principle of artesian wells, has been lately proved by the engineering investigations carried on while boring for water in the great oasis. That they were acquainted with the principle of the railroad is obvious, that is to say, they had artificial causeways, levelled, direct, and grooved, the grooves being anointed with oil, for the conveyance from great distances of enormous blocks of stone, entire stone temples, and colossal statues of half the height of the monument. Remnants of iron, it is said, have lately been found in these grooves. Finally, M. Arago has argued, that they not only possessed a knowledge of steam power, which they employed in the cavern mysteries of their pagan freemasonry (the oldest in the world, of which the Pyramids were the lodges), but that the modern steam engine is derived, through Solomon de Caus the predecessor of Worcester, from the invention of Hero, the Egyptian engineer.

The contest of the Egyptian sophos with Moses before Pharaoh, pays singular tribute to their union of "knowledge and power." No supernatural aid is

intimated. Three of the miracles of their natural magic (see Sir D. Brewster), the jugglers of the east can, and do now perform. In the fourth, an attempt to produce the lowest form of life, they fail. From the whole statement one inference is safe, that the daring ambition of the priestly chemists and anatomists, had been led from the triumphs of embalming and chicken hatching (imitating and assisting the production of life), to a Frankenstein experiment on the vital fluid, and on the principle of life itself, perhaps to experiments like those (correctly or incorrectly), ascribed to Mr. Cross, in the hope of creating, not reviving, the lowest form of animal existence.

On leaving Cairo I decided to pay a visit to Suez and the Red Sea. I passed through a town known as Zagazig. This place is supposed to have been about the head quarters of the Hebrews, whose employment as recorded in the book of Exodus, was brick-making. If a brick be broken in two at this place it reveals the fact at once that straw was mixed with the clay. I spent a few days at Suez and on the Red Sea. I managed on the Sabbath to get a religious service in a room at the Suez Hotel. The British Consul read prayers; some twenty of us were present. It was a somewhat formal affair, but very acceptable to me, who had not been able to enjoy a religious service of any sort for about six weeks.

After seeing the various sights, and visiting the various places, and after surveying the spot where the Children of Israel are supposed to have crossed, and which seemed to me to be not over three or four miles wide, I left Suez and sailed through the Suez Canal to Port Said, a distance of about ninety miles.

This canal has a world-wide notoriety. It was in or about the year 1854 when M. De Lesseps first broached the subject. The gigantic scheme found but little favour in England. It was condemned by Lord Palmerston, then prime minister, and ridiculed by the *Times* over and over again. Meanwhile the French engineer, Lesseps, persevered, but it was not until five years after this that the work was fairly commenced, and the indomitable energy and perseverance of Lesseps ultimately triumphed. It is not for me to go into the history of this stupendous undertaking. I visited all the towns and villages on the route, and was very much impressed with this vast undertaking, and was surprised to think that the wise men of England had been so short-sighted as not to see the result until the whole work was accomplished. Port Said is the Mediterranean entrance of the Suez Canal. We were weather-bound here for two or three days, but at length got away in a Russian steamer, which brought us to Jaffa (Joppa) in a day and a night. We are landed in small boats by half-naked Arabs, who row us

through the visible rocks with good nautical skill. My hotel is the sign of "The Twelve Tribes of Israel." It is outside the city, and its next neighbour is "The Jerusalem Hotel."

We arrive here on the Saturday morning, and I set out forthwith to survey the little city and its surroundings. First of all I made inquiry for the house of Simon; I found it by the seaside, close to the lighthouse. It is mainly one large room. I went to the top by outside steps. The roof is nearly flat—twelve yards by eight, with a lower flat half the size. My thoughts may be imagined. I saw the old tannery—it stands on the beach, just above high water. The top is level with the bank behind it. It was Sunday when I was there. I peeped through an aperture and saw some old skins hanging. It is supposed to be the identical tannery, and was built at first as if it were meant to last till the crack of doom.

The city, I should say, is just about the same as it was in the days of Simon the tanner. The streets are narrow and crooked, arched over and zigzag; not accessible to horses or carriages. I called to see Miss Walker Arnott, a Scotch lady, who is in charge of a school. She has some seventy children, and is a sort of missionary. Her children are Jews, Syrians, Christians and Mahometans. She brought them up, and they sang for me, and among other things they sang me "Rock of Ages." I could not refuse a little

material aid. On Sunday morning we have a service in the Hotel Jerusalem. Rev. Canon Ridgeway, of Canterbury, read the Church Service, and gave a short address. I felt deeply affected that I was permitted to worship God in the land of Israel.

In the evening we have a service in the American mission house. Dr. Keene, of the United States, and a Mr. McIntyre, a Scotch minister, take the service. At the close I stand up and speak. My words were cordially received all round, and they all crowded to shake hands with the stranger from Cheshire. Lady Hallech, the widow of General Hallech, was present, and promised me that if it were possible she would call to see my home in England.

On Monday morning we form a party of eight, all strangers to each other, and are furnished with Arab horses, and supplied with dragomen, and we literally go up to Jerusalem. We pass Lydda, the home of Dorcas. We stay for a little lunch at Ramleh, the Arimathæa of the New Testament, where the road is crowded with lepers, craving charity. We encounter a horrible road of big loose stones and mud mixed. We reach the valley of Ajalon, where we are able to stay for the night, at a place called "Babbel Waddy," where seven or eight of us sleep in a big dirty room over a stable, that was filled with horses, mules and asses.

On the next morning I rose early and walked to the top of some of the hills of Judea, and had a very fine view. I saw at a distance the burial place of Samuel the prophet. After breakfast we are all soon on the road (if I may call it a road). We seem now quite formidable, and fill the road. I count about thirty horses and mules besides our company, and some black stragglers. We are now among the mountains of Judah, and rise higher and higher, and wind about the gorges and ravines. We pass Kirjath-jearim, now all in ruins. We cross several brooks, and then come to the brook Elah, where David took the stones to fling at Goliath. I found some of the stones which David did not take, and I took a few from the bed of the stream and brought them home. We pass the beautiful vale where John the Baptist was born, and whence he set out on his mission.

We are now approaching the venerable city, and about noon I catch a glimpse of the cupola of the Mosque of Omar, and other turrets and spires. We stop outside the city and put up our horses. This was a moment of solemn contemplation and gratitude to God, that I, a stranger and foreigner from the western regions, should be permitted to see this sight, which had been the craving of my life. I enter the city bare-headed, by the Jaffa gate. There is no road for carriages; steps down in the gateway.

gazed silently around, and then exclaimed, "Oh! my God, and is this the city that I have come from the uttermost parts of the earth to see?" I walk down the first street and find it narrow and dirty, with steps in places. I go to the shop of Mr. Sharpia, bookseller, who speaks English, and he showed me the Pool of Hezekiah, and answered me many inquiries on some subsequent occasions.

We had previously arranged not to tarry in Jerusalem to-day, so in the afternoon we mounted our Arab horses and set out for the south. We crossed over the very ground where Solomon once lived, and where he once had his royal palace and gorgeous gardens, as recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. We soon come to what is known as "Rachel's Tomb" (see GEN. xxxv., 20). We halt here, as all such travellers do, to see the grave of Jacob's beloved wife, and then we proceed a few miles to Solomon's Pools, which is well known to the dragomen as very eligible and suitable camping ground. Our chief dragoman is well known by the name of "Selim." He is dressed in the usual Arab cloak of many colours, with a scarf wrapped round his head. He is mounted on a fiery Arab steed, and gallops to the front or rear as required with wonderful speed and agility. This is my first experience of living in the wilderness, and dwelling in tents. The construction of these Arab tents is a wonderful example

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We had previously arranged not to tarry in Jerusalem to-day, so in the afternoon we mounted our Arab horses and set out for the south. We crossed over the very ground where Solomon once lived, and where he once had his royal palace and gorgeous gardens, as recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. We soon come to what is known as "Rachel's Tomb" (see GEN. xxxv., 20). We halt here, as all such travellers do, to see the grave of Jacob's beloved wife, and then we proceed a few miles to Solomon's Pools, which is well known to the dragomen as very eligible and suitable camping ground. Our chief dragoman is well known by the name of "Selim." He is dressed in the usual Arab cloak of many colours, with a scarf wrapped round his head. He is mounted on a fiery Arab steed, and gallops to the front or rear as required with wonderful speed and agility. This is my first experience of living in the wilderness, and dwelling in tents. The construction of these Arab tents is a wonderful example

of style and simplicity. They are weather-proof and comfortable, and are fitted up with centre table, carpet on the floor, and all the necessities of ablution. There were four of us in my tent, and our four single flock beds were placed around our tent in a comfortable fashion. My tent-fellows were Dr. Keene, Dr. Healy, and Dr. Eaton, all Americans, and Christian ministers of some of the different churches in that country. I was the only one of the four that was destitute of the scholarly distinction, and yet not one of them had any knowledge of any language but their own, except Dr. Eaton, who knew a few words. We frequently came upon inscriptions in different languages, and as I was the only man of our party who was able to read Latin, French, and other languages, I became the interpreter during all our ten days wanderings in the wilderness of Judea.

The Pools of Solomon, large, strong, noble structures, remain to this day in a state of wonderful perfection. There are three of them, being respectively about four hundred and eighty, six hundred, and six hundred and sixty feet in length, and nearly three hundred feet in breadth. The water from the first running into the second, and from the second to the third. Each one is separated from the others by a strong embankment of solid masonry, and the altitude between one and another is from twenty to thirty feet. These reservoirs are supplied by a spring

about one hundred yards above the uppermost. It is from these pools that Jerusalem has long been supplied by water, which, when I saw it, seemed to be conveyed by an earthen pipe less than a foot in diameter. There is no doubt that these are the veritable "Solomon's Pools," and they are in every way worthy of him, and worthy of the superior mechanical skill of those times. I walked round and round, and was like them that dream.

I slept well in my new home, although the wolves and other wild animals were howling around our tents. When we came up from Jaffa we were eight travellers all told, but now we were about double the number, having received some additions on leaving Jerusalem. I counted our horses and mules, and found about forty of them, besides additional servants and stragglers, and when we were got fairly out on our way we formed an imposing caravan half a mile in length.

Our destination this morning was Hebron, supposed to be one of the oldest cities in the world, and some twenty or twenty-five miles south. We thread our way among the rocks and ravines, and after scaling a succession of hills, we come in sight of the old place. Our road was along the bed of a stream for some distance, and our horses were knee-deep.

I cannot stop to describe this old place, which was once known as Kirjath-arba, except to say that it is a sort of fossil remains of ancient times.

Hebron was once the home of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. One of my first purposes was to see the field of Machpelah. It is still a little field, less than two English acres, and is fenced round by the invulnerable cactus, which grows in this country to the thickness of a gate-post, and is far more impenetrable than any thorn hedge. This "God's Acre" is regarded by all nations as one of the most sacred places on earth. Here is the sepulchre of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and each of their wives (see GENESIS xlix., 29—32).

However superstitious it may seem, I cannot refrain from paying homage to the very dust of the illustrious dead. The good Nehemiah had a sacred regard for the sepulchre of his fathers, and when I stood bareheaded by this patriarchal tomb I felt my heart throb within me (see NEHEMIAH, ii., iii).

Our camping ground was on elevated land outside the city, and on the very spot where David had his royal residence, and where he lived and reigned as king for seven years. The entire residence is gone to destruction centuries since. We have an excellent view of the city, and of the whole locality from this high ground.

We next proceed to the plains of Mamre, and see the place where Abraham lived; it may be a mile from the city. There is a large oak still standing. It may be a successor of the old oak of Mamre.

The old residence is now a Greek convent. I took a careful survey of the country, and especially of the hill which Abraham went up with his strange visitors, from the summit of which Sodom was in sight. It was on the summit of this hill, in view of Sodom (across the Dead Sea), that Abraham held council with the Judge of all the earth as to the fate of the city.

We return by a rugged way across the hills, and eventually come to our old camping ground at Solomon's Pools, where we spend another night. We are aroused in the morning by a bell called "tim-tom," and a second bell means breakfast, which, considering that we are in the wild wilderness, is served for us in very decent fashion. In a few minutes after we have sat down to breakfast, our tents (which we have only just quitted) are struck and folded up, with all our beds and other paraphernalia, and are on the backs of horses and mules; and when our breakfast is over, we get a sight of them a mile ahead of us. The nimble celerity and ingenuity of these Arab servants was both amusing and instructive. They know what to do, and they do it, and no mistake.

Our destination this morning is Bethlehem, which we reach before noon. We enter the little old city under an archway, on which there is a large gilt star with the motto "The Star of Bethlehem." I visit the grotto where Jerome translated the Bible

into Latin. There are churches of the Armenians, Greeks, and Latins. I attend a religious service. I am shown the manger cut in the rock, where Christ was born, and I copy the superscription—"Hic de Maria Virgine Jesus Christus natus est." I observe all and keep all in my heart, but say very little.

We cross the farm of Boaz, where Ruth gleaned corn after the reapers, and we are shown the very place where tradition says that "the shepherds received the angelic salutation," and where they heard the memorable song "Glory to God in the highest, on earth, peace, goodwill to men."

After these things we travel through one of the most wild and rugged mountain regions that I ever saw. It is called "The hill country of Judea," and we were some hours in threading our way among the rocks, hills, and gorges of this terrible region, where it is said that Christ was forty days tempted of the devil, and was among the wild beasts. This wilderness is unaltered since those days, and is unalterable.

We come to Mar Saba, a Greek convent, where we find sixty-five resident monks. It is formed under the edge of a huge cliff on the verge of the Kidron. When we reach our camping ground I count forty-eight horses and mules. We are joined by an Arab sheik, with his power and prestige. He professes that there is some danger, owing to the incursions

of lawless tribes just now, and he joins us for our protection. We gladly accept his tutelage, but whether the danger be real, or merely pretended, we are unable to judge.

We leave our camping ground, which for the past night has been on a bit of level ground near the brook Kidron. This renowned brook is really a very small stream. It takes its rise near Jerusalem, and in dry weather is perfectly dry. I could easily skip over it at Mar Saba, which is only a few miles from its mouth in the Dead Sea.

We ride over a fearfully perilous road, along ridges of rock, and on the verge of frightful precipices, until after a time we begin to descend, and in an hour or two we are on the shore of the Dead Sea. We loiter and halt, secure our horses, and bathe and stroll. It is an awful region. I see no sign of life, either animal or vegetable, not a bird in the air, nor a blade of grass. We remount and cross the valley of the Jordan, and soon reach the sacred and memorable river. Here we stay for a time. I wash seven times in Jordan, and make many observations on what I see and feel this day, but I cannot now place them on record.

Our stay here is at the identical spot, or certainly very near it, where the Israelites crossed the river. (See JOSHUA, iii.) Being loth to leave the banks of Jordan, we tarry a long time in solemn conference.

We leave at length, and ride through the thicket, across the valley of the Jordan by another route to Gilgal, which was once an assize town, and when Samuel judged Israel and went in circuit he held his court of assize at this place. Some Arab huts are nearly all that remains of the once important town of Gilgal. Here we encamp for the night, and the Arab rustics dance and play antics, professedly for our amusement, but in reality for the good things of this life.

The site of Jericho was in view from the banks of Jordan, across the valley, a few miles distant.

The faithful "Tim-Tom" has been our travelling companion from the beginning, and he never fails in his duty. We hear his shrill tongue again this morning, saying "Awake, thou that sleepest." Tim-Tom seems to be clothed with authority. We all regard him with great respect, and never presume to disobey. He speaks a tongue which we all understand, and we receive from him our marching orders. So much for Tim-Tom, whom I shall never forget.

In obedience to our marching orders we mount our Arab horses again this morning, and set out for Jericho. We cross the brook Cherith. It is a strong and rapid stream, six or eight yards wide, and is knee-deep for our horses. The volume of water is ten times more than the Kidron. We soon come to Jericho, or rather to the place where once upon

a time there was such a city as Jericho. I find a few Arab huts here and there, and I find ruins, ruins, ruins. The city of Jericho has disappeared. It was once the city of palm trees, but they are all gone except one that I saw standing among the ruins of Jericho. We loiter for an hour or two. I see and take special note of Elisha's well. We have to recross the brook Cherith. We now set our faces for the renowned city. Our way for some miles is along the edge of the brook, and we are now literally going up to Jerusalem.

As we ascend our steep road, we rise higher and higher above the brook, which runs at the bottom of a deep rocky gorge on the edge of the road. This is the place where Elijah hid himself, and where there are caves one above another, large enough for a church or a temple. I look down into the gorge and see ravens flying. See I KINGS, xvii.

We come to the place where the poor fellow fell among thieves, and see the inn, which is now a caravanserie. It happens that this is the exact anniversary of the day when our Lord went up to Jerusalem from Jericho along this very road. My tears are falling all the way. After some hours of travelling we reach Bethany, and see Lazarus' grave, and the ruins of the house of Martha and Mary, and directly after leaving Bethany we turn

the spur of the hill, and all at once Jerusalem bursts upon our view. The sight is striking and impressive.

Strangers and foreigners like myself, never fail to be struck with the view which is here gained. The city is in full view all along the road to the village of Siloam, and has a brilliant appearance. The great Mosque of Omar, the old city walls, and many of the principal buildings, are plain to be seen; many of them are ornamented with turrets, towers, and spires, which generally being gilt, have a sparkling and dazzling appearance, especially in the glare of the sun. It was from this road that the Lord Jesus "beheld the city and wept over it." See Luke xix., 41. We ascend by the valley of Jehoshaphat, on the north side of the city, and come to the Jaffa gate. Our tents are pitched outside the walls, where we have our home and head-quarters during our stay for nearly a week.

It is Saturday evening when we reach Jerusalem, after a week of very hard work, during which we are supposed to have travelled over two hundred miles, chiefly on horseback. I have a walk in the streets of the city to-night. On Sunday morning, at seven o'clock, I am at the Latin church, and being Palm Sunday, I witness the palm service and procession. At 10-30 I attend service at the English church on Mount Zion; I was deeply moved when

they began to sing, in the same old English tune that we have at home,

“There is a fountain filled with blood.”

The thought that I was permitted to worship God on Mount Zion broke me down into a flood of tears. The old German Bishop Gobat (since dead), gave us a sermon on the “Penitent thief.” When the service was over I introduced myself to him in the vestry. He received me very cordially, and we spoke of the Christianity of England, also of the Evangelical Alliance, and other matters. He charged me to give his Christian love to the Christians of England, and gave me his hand with great cordiality, and I left him (with tears in my eyes) never to see him again. In the afternoon of this (the Sabbath) day, I walk round the south side of the city outside. I see the sepulchres of Zacharias and St. James, also the tomb of Absalom. I then go into the garden of Gethsemane, which is walled in and neatly kept, also, I see the place of agony. I see the place where Judas kissed his master, I also see Mary’s tomb, and then walk to the top of the Mount of Olives, where I stay for an hour or two among the huge old olive trees, some of which it is thought date from the days of Christ; I then walk back with tears in my eyes. We have a service among ourselves this evening, when one of our excellent travelling companions, a Mr. Griffith of London, gave us an address on

“Joseph, whose feet were bound in fetters.” (See PSALM CV.) I am grateful to my heavenly Father for what I have seen and heard this day. The impressions made upon my mind can never be erased.

To-day, Monday, a small party of us in charge of a guide traverse the city through and through. We see a sort of bedlam Arab market. We see the place where James was beheaded. We see the old trees said to have been planted in the days of Herod. We pass through the Zion gate; get a good view of the Dead Sea. Mount Nebo is very visible from this place, and I get a fine view of Pisgah's top, and the snow-capped mountains of Moab. See the place where Peter was in prison, and see the house of Caiaphas. We enter the precincts of David's tomb, where the king was buried. We see the hill of offence, and the place where Peter wept bitterly. We see the place where one hundred and twenty lepers are kept. We enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; go into the new tomb where the Lord lay, and see the stone where the angel sat. We are shown the places where it is said Christ was crowned with thorns, and was bound and crucified.

We pay a special visit to the upper room, where our Lord ate His last supper. I take out my Testament, and I read “Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said,

Take, eat, this is my body." These pages are not for the purpose of argument, and yet I began unconsciously, in my own mind, to discuss the honest meaning of these words, which were spoken by Christ when he was *living*, and when his body was neither *given*, *bruised*, nor *broken*. We often hear and read of the "real presence," the "real corporeal presence," the "body" of Christ, which is verily and indeed taken and eaten in the Lord's supper. I stood in the very upper room, and I did my best to look at the question with an honest mind, and free from all priestly predilection, and I wondered how it was possible for the disciples to believe that the bread which they ate was the actual human flesh of a man who was still living, and whose body was not then broken.

I read a little further and I find these words, "And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins;" but the fact is that when these words were spoken His blood was not shed. It is evident that the present tense has a prospective meaning. If we must take these words literally, we must suppose that Christ spoke these words after "His death and blood-shedding," which would be absurd, and to my mind it seemed unreasonable to suppose that the disciples were

actually and knowingly drinking the very human blood of a man who was still living, and who at that time had not shed one drop of blood. I asked then, and I ask it again now, whether any pure-minded Christian man, who is not blinded by priestly superstition, can honestly suppose that the disciples knew and believed that they were actually eating the very human flesh and drinking the very human blood of their Master, who at that time was alive and was preaching to them His farewell sermon? Thoughts of this nature ran through my mind when I was in the upper room in Jerusalem.

I have no doubt whatever that the priests of later times have given a meaning to the words of Christ which He never intended. Our Lord's disciples understood His words in a more spiritual, and therefore in a much higher sense. They had no carnivorous and revolting ideas about eating human flesh and drinking human blood. They knew and they understood the Saviour's commemorative command, "Do this in remembrance of me," and this they observed in the early days before Christianity became corrupted. I know the arguments which have been adduced on the other side, but there is not one of them that appears to me to have any real foundation. For my own part, I receive and observe the sacrament of the Lord's supper just as I believe the disciples did at first, and I see no reason to

depart from the simplicity of divine truth in favour of the device of men.

When I have been travelling in the eastern countries, and indeed in Rome and other places, I have often met with priests and others saying prayers to the Virgin Mary. I made inquiry from a devout Catholic, and I asked him if he believed that the Virgin Mary possessed the attribute of omnipresence, when he replied "Certainly not." I then asked him how it is possible for her to hear the prayers of worshippers in all parts of the world at the same time, unless she possessed this attribute. He replied, "Oh! whenever I pray I never go to the Virgin at all, I go to my heavenly Father and pray straight to God Almighty." This answer was very creditable to this sincere Catholic, and yet it did not answer my question, and to this day I have never met with anyone who is able to give me an intelligent answer to this question, except on the supposition that the Virgin Mary is possessed of the divine attribute of omnipresence, which we have always regarded as an attribute of Deity.

We see the house of Dives the rich man. We see also the ancient gate of Jerusalem, and the *Via Dolorosa*, or "Sorrowful Way." We see the graves of Adam and Melchizedek. We see Pilate's house and the hall "*Ecce Homo*." We see St. Stephen's gate, and the pool of Bethesda. We see

the place where Stephen was stoned, and the place where Judas hanged himself. We see the site of David's gardens, and the pool of Siloam. We see the place where Joseph worked and Mary washed. We see the graves of Solomon and Jehoshaphat, and the Jews' burial ground. We go again to the garden of Gethsemane, and to the Mount of Olives. We see the Lord's prayer in thirty-two languages. We descend and go into the tombs of the kings, and I see what is meant by rolling away the stone, which I never understood before. We pay another visit to Bethany, and see the place where Christ ascended into heaven.

I go in the evening to see the American Consul, De Hasse, Esq. I found him a most intelligent man, and he gave me much information. He reckons the population of Jerusalem to be thirty thousand. There is no Sabbath school except those supported by the English and Germans, which take in some five hundred children. Mahometans teach a little reading and writing to the boys, but nothing to the girls, who are supposed not to be immortal. He showed me some official documents of the Turkish government. He had a youth in his service who had travelled with Livingstone, who was brought into the room, and I conversed with him. I told Mr. De Hasse that during my stay in the Holy Land I had always to send fifty miles to post

a letter. He said that there was no such thing as a post office in Jerusalem, nor a single newspaper published in all Palestine. He told me that he had found in a stone coffin, a copy of the books of Moses, supposed to be two thousand years old. He also referred me to the book of Maccabees for an account of the "Ark of the Covenant." He invited me for tea and supper, and I found in him a rich store of intelligence.

I paid a further visit to the great Mosque of Omar, which stands where Solomon's temple stood. It is a huge and most gorgeous place, which I cannot pretend to describe. I find a large space of ground near this place and inside the city, of ten acres at least, covered with rough grass and some few old olive trees. They showed me the place where Solomon stood and kneeled on the brazen scaffold. I go down to see the acres of ruins beneath. I find stupendous pillars partly embedded in rubbish. These pillars are said to have been the pillars of the first temple, and date from the days of Solomon. I see the beautiful gate which deserves its name. It is about thirty feet high, and the workmanship of the marble pillars is of the most rich and exquisite nature. We see the Jews' synagogue, and the place of wailing. We see David's tower, and the English hospital, and a thousand things besides.

I have another solitary walk round the outside of

the city all alone, and I inspect very minutely the old walls and towers, which are generally formidable and imposing in appearance, and are mostly in good repair and condition.

On the next morning I accompany a few of my fellow travellers northward, and see Mizpeh, Gibeah, and Rama, where Samuel lived, and Bethel beyond ; after seeing these regions I bid adieu to some old friends that I shall never see again, and return to Jerusalem. This afternoon I go over the old ground, and see the city inside and outside, and take my last view of these rare sights, which I had come from the uttermost parts of the earth to see. After witnessing the remarkable service of the Jewish passover, I sleep inside the city at the Mediterranean hotel, with the pools of Hezekiah under my room window.

As I am now leaving the Holy Land, I will make a few general observations. I see that a large part of the country is a wilderness, but not a waste, or more correctly, it is desolate, but not desert. The climate seems to be conducive to vegetable life. It evidently has been "a land of corn, and wine, and oil." I see in all directions the ruins and remains of terraces on the hill sides, such as we see to-day on the banks of the Rhine, and in many other places. These terraces, one above another, tell me in language plainer than words, that there was a time when this

country was prolific of the grape. The open country almost everywhere is simply covered during the early spring, with a beautiful little flower a few inches high, resembling the lily. I am not surprised that our Lord, who had an eye to the beautiful, should say, "Consider the lilies of the field."

Judging from appearances, there is no real ownership of land in the open country. I see shepherds in charge of their flocks of sheep and goats, and they seem to roam over the country "without let or hindrance," from Dan to Beersheba. I seldom see any steady labour of any sort. Men generally do not *stand* to talk; they squat down on their heels and sit cross-legged, and smoke almost incessantly, as if it were a necessity of their existence. The women seem to have the hardest lot, and do the most work. The women of Jerusalem sally forth into the thickets and woods miles away, and gather large bundles of dead sticks, which they carry on their heads into the city. There is a regular fire-stick market in Jerusalem, where a large local trade is done in the article of firewood.

There are several little orange carts about Jaffa, besides some other little vehicles. With these exceptions I never saw a single carriage of any sort, not even a wheelbarrow, in all my travels. The camel, which is called "the ship of the desert," is the great beast of burden. I have seen wife and

children, and the furniture of the home, all stacked upon the back of a camel, which steers along quite unconscious of the fact that he is bearing and carrying upon his back the contents (living and dead) of an entire domestic establishment. If it should happen that an animal dies on the road side it is simply left unburied, and almost immediately there is a huge flock of eagles instinctively gathered together, and are fighting over the dead carcass, and in a day or two every bit of flesh is gone, and there is nothing left but the naked skeleton. I did not know till I came to Palestine the meaning of our Lord's words, "Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Agricultural knowledge and industry as understood in England, is not found in Palestine. I never saw a team of horses or a decent plough, nor indeed a decent implement of any sort in that country. Samson speaks of "ploughing with the heifer," and the same thing may be seen to this day. I have seen mules, asses, cows, camels, heifers, and even a pig ploughing, and in only one instance did I see a pair of bullocks at work. There was a time, evidently, when the lands generally were separated by proper ditches and fences, but they are mostly gone to wreck, except in the immediate neighbourhood of villages and orange groves, where the cactus is cultivated as a fence. Except in the valley of the Jordan, and here

and there in other valleys, I saw very little grazing land in good condition. It has simply grown wild by sheer neglect, and in addition to the lilies, I see in many places a great number of strong common dog daisies three or four feet high.

Neither in Jerusalem nor in any other city or town that I have seen in Palestine is there one single street that deserves the name. The very best that I have seen is narrow, crooked, badly paved, rough and dirty. The native shops do not deserve the name. The shopkeeper, who is both master and man, sits cross-legged like a tailor on his board just between inside and outside. His stock-in-trade is mostly within his reach, and he serves his customer who stands outside. There are a few shops of a rather better description, which are in the hands of Europeans. There is not a single street that can receive a carriage of any sort. Mules and asses are seen with tubs slung on each side, and these tubs are receptacles for some of the filth and rubbish which is carried away, but the greater part of the dirt and rubbish remains behind for some more convenient season. This is a very faint description of the state of things in Jerusalem. If my readers wish to get a full knowledge, they must see it with their own eyes.

Before leaving Jerusalem, I looked at the row of good houses then lately built by Sir Moses Montefiore,

who was a rich and generous Jew. He died within a few years past, on the east coast of Kent. He had become a centenarian, and had done great things for his countrymen. The houses are modern, built in the European style. They are situate across the Hinnom valley, and are very plain to be seen from the city.

In all my wanderings and sojourns in these eastern lands, I have not met with one single thing to cast doubt on the genuineness of the biblical records, but on the contrary, everything which I have seen and learned has served incontestably to prove to my mind the historical authenticity of the sacred writings. I believe that no intelligent man with a single eye and honest heart, who will go over the ground as I have done, will fail to come home with the like impression.

I will supplement my remarks on the old city by a letter written by Lord Beaconsfield, in 1885, respecting Jerusalem:—"I will describe it to you from the Mount of Olives. This is a very high hill, still partially covered with the tree which gives it a name. Jerusalem is situated upon an opposite height, which descends as a steep ravine, and forms, with the assistance of the Mount of Olives, the narrow valley of Jehoshaphat. Jerusalem is entirely surrounded by an old feudal wall, with towers and gates of the time of the Crusaders, and in perfect

preservation; as the town is built upon a hill, you can, from the opposite height, discern the roof of almost every house. In the front is the magnificent mosque, built upon the site of the temple, with its beautiful gardens and fantastic gates; a variety of domes and towers rise in all directions; the houses are of a bright stone. I was thunderstruck. I saw before me apparently a gorgeous city. Nothing can be conceived more wild and terrible, and barren, than the surrounding scenery, dark, stony, and severe; but the ground is thrown about in such picturesque undulations, that the mind is full of the sublime, not the beautiful; rich and waving woods, and sparkling cultivation would be misplaced. The city on the other side is in the plain, the ravine not being all round. It is, as it were, in a bowl of mountains. I have dotted down materials for description; I have not space to describe. I leave it to your lively imagination to fill up the rest. Except Athens, I never saw anything more essentially striking; no city, except that, whose site was so pre-eminently impressive. I will not place it below the city of Minerva. Athens and Jerusalem in their glory must have been the finest representations of the beautiful and the sublime."

In all my journeyings, from beginning to end, I have taken care to record in my own journal most of the principal things that I have seen and

heard, but I have not space in this little work for one tenth part of the matters and events that have come under my notice, each one of which, if reported in detail, would occupy several pages. I must curtail my remarks. I leave Jerusalem with two or three companions, and I ride to Jaffa, nearly forty miles, in one day. During this day's journey, we pass the ruins of old towns and cross the valley of Ajalon, where Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. We pass Bethoron and Ramleh, cross the plain where Samson caught the foxes, see Lydda and Tabitha's well, and reach Jaffa about eight o'clock at night pretty well tired, and sleep at my old hotel, "The Twelve Tribes of Israel."

I am now again in Jaffa (Joppa). The public burial ground is in front of my room window. I see several companies of friends sitting on the ground around the graves of the departed which is the custom here. I spend most of the day in going through and through the little old city of Jaffa. I see the place where Jonah went aboard and took ship to Tarshish, but he was arrested on his journey and was landed where he did not expect. I have another view of Simon's house, and I bid a final farewell to the land of Israel, which I shall never see again. I have seen the old Jerusalem, and my aspirations in the future must be to make a permanent

home in the new Jerusalem, which is situate on the other side the river.

At four o'clock I am on board the French steamer "The Tage," and set sail for Port Said, where I get letters from home. We then proceed to Alexandria, where we arrive on Sunday morning, two days and nights since leaving Jaffa.

I attend the English church in the great square, and am surprised to find a good sized church and a good attendance, but no sermon. On Monday I go to see the bazaars, the markets, the principal sights, Pompey's Pillar, Cleopatra's Needle, and other things. I do some shopping. I see the practices of the money-changers, who, in these eastern towns and cities, sit on a seat in the open street with a glass case before them, with the coin and paper of all countries. I found them ready to exchange whatever I wanted. On the Tuesday morning, I go on board my steamer, "The Africa," and we set sail for Europe. We sight Candia and Greece, and after a rough and eventful voyage, we reach Messina on the following Sunday.

We stay in Messina only a few hours on the Sabbath day, and yet during our short stay we had fellows who had come on board to sell all sorts of obscene prints, and were trying to do business with the passengers. There is no law here to stop this filthy traffic, and we could only wish that the dirty

beasts were chucked overboard. We proceed on our voyage, and soon we are off the coast of Stromboli, a small island which can boast its active volcano. We saw the flames from the deck of our steamer. We reach Naples the next day, and cast anchor on the very ground whence I had set sail about two months previously. After a stay of a few hours we proceed again to sea. We pass the place where St. Paul landed on his way to Rome. We pass Civita Vecchia, sail close by the island of Elba, which was once the domain of the first Napoleon; see the island of Corsica, the birthplace of the man who became the scourge of Europe, and after a day and a night from Naples, cast anchor in the harbour of Leghorn.

We stay one day in Leghorn, and then leave for Genoa, where we arrive the next day; so ends another ten days at sea. I take train to Turin, and thence *via* Mont Cenis tunnel, and through Savoy, and direct for Paris day and night, several hundred miles. Here I get letters from home. I do not delay longer than necessary. I take train for Boulogne, and steamer to Folkestone, and thence to London, where I meet my late dear wife after an absence of nearly three months. We meet in tears of tender love and affection, and on our knees we praise God for all His goodness. On the following morning (Sunday) we go to the great Metropolitan

tabernacle, and hear the Rev. C. Spurgeon. We also attend service at St. Paul's, and spend the Sabbath in London. On the next day (Monday) we come home by the Great Northern and Manchester. So ends the most eventful and the most memorable expedition of my life.



CHAPTER XII.



OUR local historian of Northwich, who is, I believe, a member of the State Church, has given us a few particulars from the records of our parish church during the last century. In the glimmering light of our times, the proceedings of the clergy and their churchwardens in the days of our fathers, seem hardly credible.

The parish books abound with items of expenditure, which in those times were paid out of the public church rate, which everybody was legally bound to pay. Take the following—"1718, July 5th, spent at Mr. Twamlow's (public house), several being in company, eight shillings. Bottles as Mr. Fishwick dropt (broke) one shilling and threepence. December 25th, Christmas day, spent on ourselves, parson, and others, at Jeffery's (public house) twenty shillings. Sacrament, three quarts claret at Robinson's, and *two* quarts at Jeffery's; five quarts, ten shillings." January 4, 1719, "spent yesterday evening on Mr. Henchman, two shillings, who preached both ends of the day, and delivered sacrament, so spent on him and others yesterday evening, at Jeffery's, five shillings and twopence."

The name of Jeffery was well known in Northwich in the last century. It is supposed to have been a member of this notable family who headed the mob in the days of the early Methodist preachers. A young fop is represented to have been guilty of brutal conduct, and Mr. Wesley tells us that his name was Jeffery.

In those days, the church and the Jeffery's seem to have been on very good terms, public houses were multiplied in all directions, and drunkenness was then increasing by "leaps and bounds," and yet, scarcely a single church had been built in Cheshire for generations.

After these things, John Wesley made his first appearance in Northwich, and our local historian writes, "No wonder that he was mobbed when he ventured into the narrow high street and stood on the flight of steps to one of the houses. Some sparks of the town, named Jeffery, were the ringleaders."

On another occasion, the mob crowded round a cottage door in Crown Street, where the preacher had taken refuge. There had been a shout "Throw him into the lake," which was a wide foul ditch behind the Crown Inn (the Cut). There was a great mob and a great row; a strong and resolute woman came to the rescue, and with a hot poker in her right hand, and a strong arm, she was more than a match for the Jefferys and all their fraternity, and

eventually the howling multitude fled before the vengeance of a woman; after this, Wesley left the town in peace, and trotted to the abode of his faithful friend, Daniel Barker, of Little Leigh.

For several generations the State Church had been gradually "waxing worse and worse," and it is reasonably certain that she would steadily have marched on in the "down grade" to this day, had it not been for the rising tide of Dissent.

Whatever there is of better morality, whatever there is of temperance, whatever there is of propriety and prosperity, whatever there is of religious life and success in our State Church, she may thank those who are outside, and who are not within her pale, or in other words, she may thank the great Non-conformist family for showing her how to do it.

If Wesley had been living at this day, he might justly and truly have addressed the State Church in the very words of Cardinal Wolsey to Cromwell (as related by Shakespeare). He might honestly and truly have said, "I taught thee," yes, "I taught thee." No reasonable man can doubt that our State Church owes a huge debt of gratitude to her Non-conformist friends. Whether she will ever gratefully acknowledge and honestly try to repay, remains to be seen.

There are many villages and populous country places in Cheshire, which were four or five miles

from the parish church. These places had been for generations entirely destitute of any religious service whatever, and yet from time immemorial had been compelled to pay their tithes and church rates in support of the distant parish church, which they very seldom ever saw.

Scarcely any attempt was ever made to carry the light of the gospel to any of these remote villages and hamlets, which (owing to great distances and bad roads) were doomed to spiritual destitution.

During all these generations our State Church had in hand, in the shape of livings, tithes, rates and other emoluments, ample funds wherewith to reach the spiritual waste. The State Church might, and the State Church certainly ought, to have taken possession of these waste places, and she ought to have supplied the bread of life to these famishing people generations since.

It is roughly estimated that there are about a hundred country villages or populous places in Cheshire, and about double the number in Lancashire, which were entirely destitute of any religious service whatever, until the Methodists or some other dissenting church took possession of them; built their chapels, and raised a Christian cause, and, for the first time in their history, these long-neglected places were each of them favoured with a place of religious worship in their midst.

Very many of the clergy of these large parishes knew perfectly well that vice and shame were reigning rampant in the remote villages of their parishes, and yet they never lifted a finger or took a step to cultivate these waste places, or supply the famishing people with spiritual food, until some religious body had built their sanctuary, and had taken possession of them.

John Wesley (who still lives in all the branches of the great Methodist family) has been the guiding spirit of the State Church for the past generations, and it is almost certain that few or none of all these churches would ever have been built in Cheshire and Lancashire, had it not been for the ghost of Wesley, "who being dead, yet speaketh;" and "I turned to see the voice which spoke to me," and being turned, I heard the voice which said, "I taught thee," yes "I taught thee," "I opened thine eyes," "I aroused thee," "I led thee into these lost places, whither thou wouldst not, and I taught thee how to build churches."

It is morally certain, and perfectly clear to every man "who has understanding of the times," and who can calculate events and their causes, and who can add two and two together, that had it not been for the spread of Dissent, had it not been for the growth of Nonconformity, and especially had it not been for the advancing tide of Methodism, we should

never have seen our new churches in the neighbourhood of Northwich and Winsford, besides many villages, all of which I have seen built in my own day.

It is reasonably certain that no bill would ever have been brought in, and no Act of Parliament would ever have been obtained for the purpose of building and endowing our Weaver churches at the public expense, had it not been for the formidable advance-guard of the Methodist churches. "Some preach Christ of envy and strife, and some of goodwill."

Saul of Tarsus sat at the feet of Gamaliel, took his lessons as a student, and was not ashamed to confess it in after life.

"Herod the king feared (revered) John because he was a just man, and he observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things." It is evident that Herod shaped his conduct and amended his ways in many respects, in obedience to the teaching of John the Baptist.

It was always the opinion of Wesley, that Methodism was raised up to reform the Church, to enlighten the clergy, and to spread scriptural holiness through the land.

The clergy of our State Church, from the most Reverend the Archbishop of Canterbury, down to the humblest curate in the land, are this day sitting at

the feet of Wesley, and whether they admit it or not, are taking their lessons from him and his followers.

It was no disgrace, but rather creditable to Herod the king, to be influenced by the words of John the Baptist; and it is no disgrace, but rather creditable, to the most eminent clergyman in the land to be influenced by wise words and noble deeds wherever they may come from.

It is a common fault, not only with the ministers of every church, but also with all of us, that after being taught lessons of priceless value, we have sometimes the meanness to deny and to ignore our teacher. Whenever we are well and successfully led, it is always becoming us honestly to confess and to honour our leader.

When I was a young man, I knew nearly all the country churches and the church people for many miles round. We never heard, in those days, of Bible readings or Bible lessons. Pastoral visiting was practically unknown. Missionary meetings, in those days, were regarded by the clergy as a Methodist craze, and highly unbecoming the church.

All our country churches were shut against Sabbath evening services, as if such a thing would be a scandalous desecration. I do not remember a single church anywhere that was provided with gas, or lamps, or even candles, nor was any provision of any sort made for evening services. This was

the general state of things until after the Methodists had led the way in the matter of evening services, and then the Church, in obedience to the Methodist practice, decided to follow the example. In all these matters, and many others, the State Church has shown itself amenable to outside influences, and wherever a good example has been set, has not hesitated to follow it.

Some forty or fifty years since, it was the general and I may almost say the universal practice for clergymen to deliver what were called "Lithograph discourses." I knew a great many clergymen in those days, but I did not know one who ever attempted to preach without a book.

It is worthy of remark that our church ministers have long been taking lessons from the outside, on the subject of extempore preaching. It is quite true that many of the inferior clergy continue to read their purchased sermons, yet, while this is the case, it has become notable that the able and distinguished church ministers generally preach extempore.

It was amusing one day to hear a lady say, "Do you know that our minister preaches now without a book, he is the best preacher that you ever heard, I wish you would come and hear him, he preaches just like a Methodist."

It is not my purpose to glorify the ministers or preachers of any church beyond what they honestly

deserve. It is well known that many of our lay preachers are men of slender education and few talents, and yet, being good and sensible men, are generally acceptable. It is no less true that there are very many accredited ministers in the ranks of both the State Church and the Nonconformists, whose real abilities are very small, and who in some respects are much inferior to some of their lay brethren.

Sometimes men are exalted to a higher seat than they honestly deserve. I judge no man. There are very many excellent men and able ministers in our State Church, and there are many equally excellent and equally able ministers among the churches outside.

Our State Church (much to her credit) is largely amenable to outside influence, and in many instances she has received the light, unconscious of its source. I refer not only to the matters already named, but I refer also to matters of faith and doctrine. I will confine myself for the present to the one creed of election and predestination.

There are many good and intelligent men, both lay and clerical, who have only a very superficial knowledge of the faith and doctrine of the church as settled over three hundred years since, and which are set forth in the thirty-nine articles as the universal creed of the church. The faith and doctrine so settled, and declared in very forcible

language, remain, and are binding and unaltered down to this day. The seventeenth article reads as follows:—"Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He hath constantly decreed by His counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.

Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose, by His spirit working in due season, they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

The same article of religion goes on to say:—"As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, . . . so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes, the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."

The plain meaning of this article of religion is this, that before the first man was created, and before one of the great human family was born, it pleased God (long before they had done either good or evil) to elect certain persons to everlasting life, and to leave all the rest of mankind in the hands of the devil to perish everlastingly.

It is pretty well known among Bible students, that very many excellent and able men have differed in their views as to the scriptural soundness of this doctrine. It would not be modest in me to contend or to give an opinion where so many mighty men have fought, and so many mighty men have failed in the contest. I merely say that the doctrine of election and predestination is one of the fundamental doctrines of the church.

Every clergyman in our State Church, from the highest to the lowest, has most solemnly declared his belief in this doctrine; and every one of them, in obedience to his confession of faith, is on this day, what is called a predestinarian.

In the last century, the clergy generally preached this doctrine. It was in their manuscripts, and was heard in almost every church on every Sabbath day. Some clergymen made themselves notorious by going into great extremes, professing to know the secret purposes of the Divine Being, and in some cases they have proceeded to point out certain persons as being

elected to life, and certain other persons as being doomed to death. It is no wonder that these proceedings (evidently imprudent) created a disagreeable sensation among the people, not only in England, but also in Scotland, where the Scotch poet treats the subject in very satirical language in what he calls "Holy Willie's Prayer," which begins as follows:

"O Thou, wha in the heav'ns dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore Thee!"

It is evident that this vital and fundamental doctrine of election and predestination is now generally ignored and disbelieved, and the clergy, as with one consent, have slowly and surely departed from it, and have turned their backs upon it. Let me ask, where is the clergyman that preaches it now? We never hear of it. Many clergymen seem not to know, not to remember, and not to care, that they have most devoutly declared their adhesion to this creed, and yet, to-day, the same men neither preach it nor believe it. I have a right to ask why this change in the unchangeable? Why have they not "kept the faith?" The seventeenth article stands where it ever has stood, and the doctrine of election is declared to be "full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons," and yet

it is practically ignored, and has become a dead letter. Where shall we look for the cause of this change, and how comes it to pass that in one momentous particular, our clergy are preaching another gospel. The true cause is not far to seek.

It was in the last century that Wesley was considering, studying, devising, framing and making new laws, rules, and regulations, for the future government of the Methodist Church, which was then coming into existence.

He was a clergyman of the church, but having opened a roving commission, he was practically thrust out of the establishment. The doors of the church, except in a few cases, were shut against him. He now threw off all parochial restraint, ignored all boundary lines between one parish and another, and publicly proclaimed that "the world was his parish."

In addition to all this, he proceeded to mark many changes in both creed and conduct, especially did he renounce, and for ever abandon, the doctrine of "election and reprobation," as taught and set forth in the seventeenth article of the Church of England. In his sermons, from beginning to end, but especially in his sermon on "free grace" he condemns this doctrine, root and branch, in very severe language.

From the days of Wesley, down to our own day,

the doctrine of "free grace" is proclaimed from every pulpit throughout all the branches of the great Methodist family. The one and universal creed is that Christ died for all, and made an atonement for the sins of all mankind. That all may be saved. That God is no respecter of persons. That he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner. That an open door is set before every man, woman and child, and that if any man perish the fault is his own.

This doctrine of "free grace" and "salvation for all," is the accepted and ratified doctrine of the great Methodist Church, and is constantly proclaimed from every Methodist pulpit, not only in this country, but also in many other countries, and is received and accepted by tens of thousands of congregations, which are estimated to reach in the aggregate, not less than twenty-five millions of souls, or in other words, the Methodist people, in all lands, are roughly reckoned to be about equal in numbers to the entire population—man, woman and child—in all England.

It has been found, by long observation and experience, that the Arminian doctrine (so called after Arminius, as pertaining to his tenets) is more congenial to the human mind. This doctrine is no other than the doctrine of "free grace," which, whether sound or not, is more acceptable to the common people, and, indeed, there is no doubt that nearly everybody prefers to believe in the fulness

of mercy, and the freedom of the human will, so that the congenial doctrine of free grace, free mercy, and free salvation, has by degrees found favour among all classes, and more or less among all churches.

It would be strange indeed if our State Church were so hard and imperious, so obstinate and impenetrable, as not to yield under the melting influx and gracious sentiment of our popular Christianity. The best people in the church gratefully accept the change, together with the personal responsibility involved.

There is no doubt that this Arminian doctrine, this doctrine of free grace, has permeated our State Church. Her ministers have slackened their line. They have removed the barrier. They have opened the door wider, and now they do not hesitate to teach that our destiny is in our own hands. There are very few clergymen now who would go into the pulpit and preach unconditioned election and reprobation as their predecessors did, and, in some instances, down to my own day. The seventeenth article above-named, is by general consent allowed to have a quiet sleep.

There are other churches besides our State Church that have felt the force of the current, and have been carried on the bosom of the rising tide. They have found it impossible to resist the irresistible. They do not now, as they did formerly, glory in the

tenets of John Calvin, and there are but few of them now to be found preaching and teaching the doctrine of unconditional election, as was formerly the case.

The Methodist churches in this country embrace thousands upon thousands of preachers, lay and clerical, who are ever and anon perambulating every town, village, and parish in this land. These men are incessantly, earnestly, and diligently teaching and preaching the Arminian doctrine of free grace, in thousands of chapels every Sabbath day; and there is no doubt that the untiring work of these ubiquitous men has done much in creating a public religious opinion in the direction of free grace and personal responsibility; and there is no doubt that this religious and outside opinion has had an unconscious and irresistible influence upon the State Church, and also upon other churches. Methodism was raised up for a purpose, and we are witnesses of the fulfilment of the original prediction.

Our State Church has certainly been wise in its generation, and during all my days has been framing nearly all its movements on the Methodist model, and our bishops and clergy, from the highest to the lowest, continue to take their lessons from Wesley, and if any excellent clergyman of our State Church should in his perplexity ask, "Whence all these changes in my church, and from whom have I learned all these fresh lessons?" the spirit of

Wesley (which still lives in the millions of his devoted followers) replies, "I taught thee; yes, I taught thee all these things."

Every really honest and intelligent reader will see the truth of my observations; and not only so, but our State Church has practically abandoned one of its fundamental articles of faith, and is now everywhere preaching another gospel. They have abandoned the doctrine of election and reprobation, and are now preaching the Arminian Methodist doctrine of "free grace," and in all these things our clergy have been compelled to bow before the power and influence of modern Methodism.

It may appear very remarkable, but I can assure my readers that it is no less remarkable than true, that nearly all the zeal of our State Church, (whether it be real or assumed) has made its appearance among us in obedience to the bidding of Wesley. Our clergy, everywhere, learn the lesson, but with one consent disown the teacher.

I may repeat generally, that whatever we may have had in this generation in the revival of modern church building, whatever we have had in church restoration and free seats for the poor, whatever has been done in converting our State Church into what they call "the poor man's church," whatever we have of fresh life and zeal, whatever we may have of the missionary spirit, whatever we may have of

cottage meetings and Bible lessons, whatever we may have of tea meetings and public bazaars, whatever we may have of evening services in our churches, whatever improvement may have taken place in the morality and sobriety of the clergy, whatever may have been done in the Church on the lines of temperance, whatever increase there may have been in the Christian knowledge, and in the personal piety of the Church and her ministers, whatever we may have of more hearty singing, whatever we may have in the shape of an order of lay preachers, as now practised in some parishes on the Methodist plan, whatever we may have of extempore preaching and extempore prayers, whatever may have been done in the creation and multiplication of Sunday schools, and in the renovation of education in general, whatever we may see of new bishoprics and new cathedrals, whatever we may hear of church extension, whatever we may have of benevolent societies and laudable munificence for the purpose of building and endowing churches, augmenting livings, helping poor curates, and other church work, whatever we have heard, seen, and known of all these things, besides many others of minor importance, too numerous to mention, the true and real cause of them all is not far to seek. I will not raise the question whether all our churches in Cheshire and other countries are an honest necessity

or not, nor will I stop to argue whether all the changes and renovations above-named are an unmixed good or not. Be all these things as they may, I have no doubt that every honest, intelligent, and capable man, who is free from all bias, predilection, and prejudice, will, on a clear review of all the circumstances, arrive at a unanimous decision, and their verdict (on hearing all the evidence), will be that the scope of my remarks is unquestionably true, and that the modern churches referred to would never have been built at all, nor would the other changes above-mentioned ever have taken place, had it not been for the rising tide of outside forces; or in other words, we should never have witnessed this visible transformation of our State Church, had it not been for the steady advance of Nonconformity in general, and of the rapid growth and irresistible influence of Methodism in particular.

Our clergy, with few exceptions, neither know nor care anything about these notable changes, and still less do they know or care about secret designs, concealed intentions and hidden motives, and some of them may not admit my statements as to the fundamental cause of these numerous changes, but my words are true nevertheless.

Our clergy, one and all, have declared their belief in Calvinistic doctrine, yet they have one and all abandoned their creed, and have embraced the tenets

of Methodism, and now they preach another gospel. This change also is attributable to the same cause, and it is even said that our Bible Society, which existed before our day, owes its existence to the same cause.

Whatever may be said for or against, we all know and readily admit that our State Church has a large and strong hold on a very numerous class in this country, and if she had only known the day of her visitation in the last century, her position would have been unassailable and irresistible.

If she had been spiritually alive, as she ought to have been, she would have taken possession of all our villages generations since, and would have supplied the famishing people with the bread of life. However, instead of doing this she has usually made her appearance as "the latest arrival," and nearly every church which has been built in Cheshire for the last fifty years is merely a supplement to the chapel, and a supplement to those Christian workers who were first on the ground, and had led the way.

It would be cruel and unjust to cast any imputation upon the good men who are now struggling to make up leeway, and to recover lost ground. While some men are born to fortune, it is the fate of others to inherit misfortune and to be doomed to cultivate an old-tilled soil, and in some cases it is their lot, as Dr. Young says, "To starve on orts, and glean a former field."

Whatever may have been the faults of our Church ministers in the past generations, whatever may have been their dereliction of duty, their unchristian life and conduct, their apathy and formality, their sin and shame, and whatever else may be laid to their charge, yet we must remember that the present generation is in no degree answerable for their predecessors. It is enough for all of us to answer for our own sin, and not for the sin of our forefathers, and the present generation of Christian teachers must be judged as we find them, and according to our present standard. Many of them have observed the signs of the times, and have tacked about to catch the breeze, and show a commendable wish to promote a better state of things, and to lead the people in the good and the right way. Many changes for the better have been made, and there is another change yet to follow. I will not predict when, yet it will certainly come, but like the fig tree, "the time of figs is not yet."

It is well known that many of the most eminent and advanced men in the Church, both clergy and laity, are not in favour of state support. They believe that a Church absolutely voluntary and free, would, in the generations past, have reached the masses of the people, and would long since have supplied their spiritual necessities. Many of the best and most able men in the land are not fascinated

with the illusions of prestige. They do not believe in the propriety of maintaining a dominant Church, nor do they believe that it is really and spiritually profitable to the Church herself to be possessed of a secular power, which tends to engender ideas of social superiority, and which supplies a strong temptation to despise those worthy Christian men who are willingly outside the favoured circle. Many of the most illustrious men in the Church do not covet special privileges, nor do they desire state favours and state advantages which are not permitted except to themselves alone, and in which religious bodies in general have neither the power nor the wish to participate.

It would be a noble thing if the clergy, without being subject to any outside pressure, and without waiting for any act of parliament, were to take the initiative, and if with one gigantic resolve, they were to declare their readiness to abandon all privilege, and to throw themselves on the Christian generosity of a devoted people.

If our clergy were voluntarily and heroically, and with one heart to declare their readiness to surrender all emoluments of office, with all livings, endowments and hopes of preferment, together with all those things that the nations of the world seek after—I say that if our Church clergy were to make this one further and final change in addition to all those

above enumerated, they would do themselves and the Church immortal honour. They would surprise all mankind by a brilliant example. They would settle at once and for ever the vexed tithe question. The stigma of being an alien church would be for ever wiped out, and they would command the admiration of the wide world.

I believe that there are some few men in the ranks of the clergy, who seem to think that if the Church were to lose her secular power, and especially if she were to lose her endowments, she would be hopelessly and for ever ruined.

If there be any such men in the Church who have such thoughts as these, let me tell them that they are among the weakest and feeblest of God's creatures, and are objects of pity. I don't hesitate to say, that when the day comes that the Church is relieved of her incubus, and liberated from her bondage, so far from being ruined, the very reverse will be the fact. Countless thousands will flock to her standard. She will lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes, and the abundance of the sea will be converted to her. When that day comes, the Church will exult in her freedom, and being open to the breath of heaven, she will shake herself from the dust, and will put on her beautiful garments. She will then be established, not by Cæsar, but by righteousness, and will live a higher and better life

in the affections of an undivided nation. When these things have come to pass, our State Church will become the real Church of England, and in the name of her God she will set up her banners, and her righteousness will go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. Thousands of the best and ablest men in the land are waiting for the day; they know that the day of deliverance will certainly come, and they are exclaiming, "How long? O Lord, holy and true, how long?" and their daily prayer is, "May the Lord hasten it."

After these things shall have been accomplished, it will be found that the people throughout the land will rise to the occasion. Not one deserving Christian minister will be forgotten. All Christendom will hail the dawn of such a blessed day, and the wonder will be that its advent has been so long in coming, and the lamentation will be that our fathers did not live to see it. Blessed will be the eyes that shall see the fulfilment of these things, when all nations will call us blessed.

Some of my readers will think that I am indulging in great hopes as to the future of my country, when Cæsar is no longer lord and master of the Church, and so I am. I expect that the day will come when my hopes will be realised and my predictions fulfilled, and that every tree which my Heavenly Father hath not planted will be rooted up. I expect

that the day will certainly come when the true Church will assert herself, when the gold will be separated from the dross, when a line will be drawn between God and Mammon, and when the fruitful branch will be purged in order that it may become more fruitful.

When these things have come to pass, the Church will soon find her own feet. She will soon provide for herself a proper government, a moral standard, and a Christian discipline. We shall have another Reformation, and the young men who are candidates for the priest's office will be required to say something besides the oft-repeated words, "We have Abraham to our Father." Each one will be asked not whether he is the unfortunate third son of his father, or whether he has seen Oxford or Cambridge, or the inside of some college, but he will be examined as to his mental calibre and his moral worth, and more important than all, he will be asked to give an account of his conversion to God, and he will be expected to relate his present Christian experience. If it is clear that he has experienced a change of heart, and is really living a devoted and Christian life, he will be further examined whether he has good pulpit talents, whether he is able to preach a good extempore sermon. When our Church is really what she ought to be, all our young candidates will be examined in these things and many more,

and if he be found wanting, he will be told to tarry in Jericho, till his beard be grown ; or rather, in the words of Christ, he will be told to tarry in Jerusalem, "until he be endued with power from on high," or more likely than all, he will be sent to ply his calling in some other field.

It is a very common opinion that our State Church is a sort of harbour of refuge, or in other words, that she is a sort of asylum, with an open door to capables and incapables alike, without regard to personal piety or pulpit fitness. On the day of ordination, the bishop does not ask inconvenient questions. The young men are strangers to him. He may never have seen them before, and he may never see them again. They may be good, bad, or indifferent. Every one of them is some mother's son, and the bishop slips them under his hand as a matter of course. We shall have a marvellous change in our land when my prophecy is fulfilled, and when all the pulpits in the church are occupied by men who have passed from death unto life, and are truly converted to God.

It ought to be more generally known that every English man and every English woman in England, are members of the Church of England, unless they are actually members of some other denomination. This, in the opinion of eminent counsel, is the law of the land. The real meaning of this is, that

no man can escape. No man is outside. If he is not a member of some other church, he belongs to our Establishment. It is plain, therefore, that the Church and the world are practically one. It is decided that every heretic, every infidel, every cursing, swearing drunkard, every blind publican, every filthy libertine, every hopeless profligate, every brothel-keeper, every thief in every prison, and every rogue and thief outside, every gambler on every race-course, with all their wretched lying, betting, cheating, filthy fraternity, together with others too numerous to mention, are all members of our State Church. The exceptions are probably not one in a hundred. No true member of any real Christian church is ever found among the contemptible moral rubbish of a race-course. I shall have a few more words on the race-course and its belongings in future pages.

It may be quite true that a very large proportion of this dissolute herd never go to church at all, and even hate its name, yet this makes no difference. They are all sailing in the same boat, and are sheep of the same flock. This state of things in our State Church is shocking and sickening to every sincere Christian man, and it is no wonder that he declines to be united in Christian fellowship with such a vile set, until they "cut off their sins by repentance, and their iniquity by turning to God." A true

Christian is always ready to give a glad welcome to every returning prodigal, and yet he cannot stoop to be mixed up with moral turpitude, and he, therefore, very naturally joins some Christian church which has its laws and its rules, which make provision for the observance of morality, honesty, decency and Christian behaviour. When our Church is dis-established, she will soon learn how to draw the dividing line between the moral and the immoral, between the Bible and the infidel, and between God and the devil.

In early times we read of certain lewd fellows of the baser sort. We also read of men of corrupt minds, and also of beasts at Ephesus, but the apostles never counted any of these vile fellows as members of their church, and no church will ever honestly deserve to be reckoned a Christian church until she is able to "go and do likewise." When Cæsar ceases to be lord and master, we shall have some very different men in the pulpits, and some very different people among the members enjoying the luxury of Christian fellowship.

The churches in general which are outside our State Church, the Methodist Churches in particular, have strict rules and conditions. Their members are not only required to live moral and upright lives, but they are also required to observe Christian duties, and to cultivate Christian graces, and no

person would knowingly be received or continued in these societies, who was known to be guilty of immoral conduct, or who did not live as a Christian ought to do.

It frequently happens that there are persons in these societies and congregations who lose their relish for faithful sermons and spiritual things, and having no root in themselves, and whose upright and moral conduct is open to suspicion, and who are too self-willed, too carnally minded, too vain, and too worldly to walk by the golden rule. These persons, being weary of Christian discipline and self-control, are on the lookout for some occasion to be liberated from all rule and restraint, and when the coveted opportunity comes, they retreat to a church where there are no moral rules or Christian discipline, and where no questions are asked, and where everybody can do as he likes. These persons, ashamed of their own transformation, often profess some grievance as a reason for their backward march, but it is well known to those who witness the retrograde movement, that the true and real cause is abject spiritual poverty, and very often moral defection.

If a true Christian man is bent on living a holier and a better life, he naturally covets fellowship with those who are like-minded, and he seeks to rise higher and higher in divine things, and in the words of Nehemiah he says, "I am doing a great work,

I cannot come down," "I cannot forsake the living fountain for the broken cistern."

It would be easy to multiply my remarks, and to give reasons for a change, which would be a great blessing to the Church herself, and also to the world. The present state of things is very unpropitious for the political morality of our clergy. The late revered John Bright frequently observed that in nearly every parish in the land, the vicar and the landowner were the centre of a political organisation, and were generally found (regardless of patriotism,) working and voting for, and supporting one political party for purely selfish purposes, and without an eye to the general good of the country. This state of things is very unfortunate for the Church, and cannot fail to have a bad influence on political honesty. If I am asked, "Do not even the publicans the same?" I reply, "Of course they do, they generally support the party who supports them, without regard to the rights of others."

It will be a blessed day for our State Church, when in all respects she is placed on a level with all other churches, when political bias is removed, and when the Church asks for no exclusive favours, and ceases to be the privileged sect. It will be a blessed day when it will be no longer possible to tempt, or buy, or bribe, or corrupt our clergy or people, by hopes or promises of promotion, state

favours, patronage, or preferment; and when the Church will be able to say, "Get thee behind me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." It will be immensely better for both the Church and the world, when our great clerical field shall no longer be the happy hunting ground of a great political party, and when our State Church shall cease to be subsidised by any political party for political and other alien purposes.

I have just mentioned the name of John Bright, who was a robust member of that society commonly called Quakers. He was a staunch Nonconformist, not merely from the highest principle, but also by inheritance. He was a successor of those persecuted Christians who lived in the days of Charles the Second. These were the days of the Conventicle Act, which, among other things, forbade more than five persons to meet together for religious worship, except that worship was according to the Common Prayer. The first fine was ten pounds on the minister, five pounds on each hearer, and twenty pounds on the house where the meeting was held. For second and third offences, the punishment was penalties as high as a hundred pounds, ending with imprisonment, transportation, and death, without the benefit of clergy. If these poor ill-used Dissenters had not been special subjects of self-restraint and Christian

discipline, they would have risen either by day or by night against the vicar-general of these horrors, and all his ruffians, and, win or lose, they would certainly have played the game of "blood for blood."

All this seems bad enough, but there is worse, if possible, to follow. It is said by our historians that the persecution of the poor Quakers has hardly a parallel in history. It was a principle of their religion never to resist their tormentors. They suffered the vilest cruelty and the most hideous abuse without a murmur. Thousands of them were in prison at once. Meeting together for Christian fellowship was their unpardonable crime. How many of England's best men were done to death in those times; or how much of England's best blood was spilt like water in those bloody days, we shall never know until the day shall declare it.

Many of these persecuted Quakers were large shopkeepers and respectable citizens, and while they were suffering and dying in prison, the human fiends in the shape of informers and constables, armed with the law, smashed up their homes, robbed and abused the broken-hearted wives and helpless children, ate and drank their food, or threw it away. It was a common thing for the women to be dragged out of their houses by the hair of the head, slapped in the face, pinched till they were black and blue, pricked with bodkins and packing needles, and in

some cases it is said they were sold as slaves to the sugar plantations.

Is it not written, "When He maketh inquisition for blood, He forgetteth not the cry of the humble?"

It is open to every reader to consult the historians of the period, where they may read of hundreds of cases, with their brutal and nefarious details, worthy of a demon from the bottomless pit. We read in the second commandment of "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." If there be one sin more than another which it is hard to forgive, it surely is the sin of which I am now writing.

I will not dwell on this dark blot in our nation's history, of which all good men are painfully ashamed. All the prime movers, and all their accessories (some of them red-handed) have long since appeared before the final court of appeal. They spent their busy lives in a vain endeavour to exterminate and annihilate the true religion of the country, but they did not live to see the result of their labours. Long before the work was half accomplished, they were called upon to emigrate to that unknown continent whence no traveller returns, and where every man is rewarded according to his works. Verily "your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand for ever."

It is an historical fact, down to the reign of Henry the Fourth, that no farmer or manufacturer was allowed to send his child to school at all; nor for generations after this, could they educate a son for the Church without the consent of their respective lords. These were the days when the Church was supreme, and when both learning and religion were strictly preserved as a monopoly.

We sometimes hear our modern luminaries ask in a pompous style, "What have the Dissenters ever done for education? What schools have they ever built?" If these men themselves had been well educated; if these men themselves had been enlightened as to the laws and religion of our country, they would not for very shame ask any such questions. I can only pray, in the words of Elisha the prophet, "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see."

In these days very little mercy was shown to those who infringed the laws of the Church, and for centuries the prison doors were open to take in every man or woman, outside the Church, who attempted to teach or preach either learning or religion.

It seems scarcely credible that these shocking and brutal persecutions took place under the professed authority of law; and men high in the Church, and high in authority, were the prime movers and leading spirits. They were the eminent and learned men of

those times, the men of "light and leading," who did not allow any man but themselves to teach either grammar or gospel. If a dissenting minister presumed to speak to a dozen Christian people in a cottage, he was taken to prison, where he was locked up, often for years, without bail or mainprize. If a dissenting minister were to open a little school in his cottage, and collect a dozen children about him, he would soon have a visit from the constable, who would hale him before the authorities, where he was liable to a penalty of forty pounds for presuming to teach the poor boys to read the Bible. This was the law, down almost to modern times.

There are among us to-day some of the children of the Puritans. We have the sons and daughters, and legitimate successors, whose fathers and mothers were done to death by the bloody hands of the persecutors. The sins of the fathers are sometimes visited upon the children. It is not easy to forgive even the children of them that stoned the prophets, and were guilty of the blood of our fathers and mothers. I judge no man. There is great room for mercy and forbearance.

I make no pretensions to exalted virtue, but God being my judge, I would rather beg my bread from my cradle to my grave, than sit upon a throne with innocent blood in the skirts of my garments. If I had my choice in such circumstances, I would rather,

a thousand times over, be the persecuted than the persecutor. I would rather be the culprit than the judge.

Oh! the men who have laid wicked hands on the Lord's disciples, and have spilt their blood like water, with what words will they answer it to God in the day of visitation?

When all our hopes are fulfilled, and when we have a free Church and a free people, the day will be celebrated in loud hosannas, which will be sung by countless thousands of those who wish well to our Zion; and in addition to all this, we shall be entitled to a new and triumphant national anthem from the pen of our poet laureate, and founded upon the words of the prophet: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Verily, the abundance of the sea shall be converted to thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations, and thou shalt know that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

“The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. My people shall inherit the land for ever. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time.”

Before concluding this part of my subject, I must notice a stupid error. A Welsh clergyman charges all the churches in Wales (except his own) with being guilty of the deadly sin of “schism.” Whether this erudite public teacher has ever seen the interior of a college I know not, but it is quite evident that he has never mastered his Latin and Greek, or he would know the true meaning of the word “schism.” We sometimes hear of other clergymen and other men in our State Church speaking of “schism,” which they seem to think applies to Nonconformists, and indeed to all those who belong to churches outside of the Establishment. Such an application of the word is a gross error, and arises from a defect in education. All persons who are well educated, and who understand their Latin and Greek, will know that the word “schism” refers to strife and division “*within*” a church, and has no reference

whatever to outside congregations or churches. The members of outside churches, such as the Methodists, Baptists, Independents, and many others, know their own laws and rules, and generally keep them. The "schism" among them is very insignificant, temporary, and local.

This cannot be said of our State Church, where the "schism" is not only general and extensive, but is also enduring, abiding, and permanent. The parties in our Established Church are notoriously various, hostile, and irreconcilable, and yet the hostile parties continue to belong to the same church, supplying us with a visible example of "schism."

Every clergyman in our State Church can practically follow his own fancy. He can announce himself as belonging to the High Church, the Low Church, the Broad Church, the Evangelical Church, or if it should suit his fancy, he can make great pretensions and professions of high ritual. It has often been remarked that the men who are notable for their high ritual are men of small mental dimensions, and they resort to an imposing ritual as a substitute for real efficiency. Men of the first order, and of supreme ability, would be ashamed to stoop to show and ostentation.

If a man has a clear head, an honest heart, and an able tongue, he can well afford to despise dress and drapery. He knows perfectly well that there is not

a single word in the New Testament in support of such an illusion; and he also knows equally well that neither Jesus Christ himself, nor any of his apostles, ever stooped to such an artifice, for the purpose of generating a superstitious reverence. We read that the Pharisees compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made he is still more the child of hell.

Grandiloquent music and tawdry millinery are but the covert for paucity of talents and natural weakness. When such human devices are dangled before our eyes as symbols of sacred service, it reveals to us, in language plainer than words, a pitiable state of spiritual destitution, and of mental and moral barrenness.

Everybody knows that what is called a high ritual is merely a semblance and an ostentatious display, that there is no reality in it, and that all such services are entirely unauthorised by the New Testament, and yet, strange to say, there are thousands of persons, more especially among the feminine sex, who are fascinated and charmed by what—in their rational moments—they must know is nothing but a deception and a counterfeit. It is to be feared that some clergymen are much to be blamed for imposing upon the weakness of their people, in virtually and incessantly drawing them on and on into a state of hopeless superstition, instead of supplying them with spiritual food, and feeding them with the bread of life.

I must now proceed to other matters. There are not many things more sickening to me than the sight of a sea of human heads such as may be seen on a race-course like the Roodee in Chester. Such a gathering is the devil's own great camp meeting, and if he were to spread his net over the surging crowd, he would inclose a great multitude, and would have a prodigious haul of his own peculiar people, and if he took them all alive down into the pit, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, he would rid the world of a seething mass of moral scum, and the air we breathe would be less poisoned by a "generation of vipers." Our climate would suffer much less from pollution and defilement, and if such a sweeping process of disinfection were carried out generally, it would have a wonderful effect, and a huge accumulation of filthiness, corruption, and turpitude would be swallowed up, and our moral atmosphere would be much sweetened and purified.

If the Tartarean net were spread in manner as above mentioned, it would certainly embrace thousands upon thousands of living creatures, but not one living Christian. It would embrace a great multitude of human beings, who, according to pretence or profession, and also according to legal definition, may be called "Church men," but not one true follower of Jesus Christ would be caught in the devil's net. Every really good man shuns the devil's

ground as he would shun the pestilence or black death.

It is not possible to conceive of anything more absolutely blind and deplorable than our infatuated, lying, cheating professional gambler. Not one good or sober thought ever enters his head. In his dictionary the shadow is the substance, the chaff is the wheat, and the veriest dross is the purest gold. In the eyes of a good and wise man, his condition is pitiable and abominable. He looks no way but downward, and while he himself is steeped in moral filth and corruption, he is doing his worst to corrupt and ruin our youth in thousands. "Their way is the way of death, and their steps take hold on hell."

These pests of society little know how dependent they are upon the "excellent of the earth," for the ground they tread upon, and for their very existence.

The world is a large field, in which there is a mixed growing crop of wheat and tares. The tares are not aware that the wheat is their safeguard and protection. If the crop were all tares, and no wheat in the field, the Great Master would make short work of the tares. His command would go forth at once to the reapers, "Gather up the tares, and bind them in bundles to be burned." If all the doors of every prison in England were opened at once, and all the thieves and criminals were let loose upon society,

they would not, as a moral pestilence, equal our race-courses. "Consider this, ye that forget."

Some of my words may seem rather severe on my gambling friends, but I am careful not to overstate my case, nor to paint them in darker colours than they deserve. I am willing to admit that our publicans are in the van, and lead the way in the paths of vice, and that they do a large business in dealing out ruin and death to the bodies and souls of our fellow-creatures. I do not dispute the alleged fact, that they bury in the drunkard's grave, in England alone, far more than a hundred of their customers each and every day the year round. Fresh recruits are always ready, waiting to fill up the ranks, who in their turn come to the same end, so that the grave opens its mouth to receive a thousand drunkards every week all the year round, or, in round numbers, over fifty thousand a year.

It is no fault of the city of Chester that it happens, unfortunately, to be the periodical gathering-ground of a large herd of the betting fraternity. They crowd the public-houses, but they bring no good to the city. The most excellent citizens bid them no welcome, and are always glad to be rid of them; they are among the worst of the Queen's subjects, corrupt and corrupting. The vile example of these vile sinners encourages other weaklings to try their luck, and we have our cobblers and nailers, tinkers and tailors,

who have hardly a shoe to their foot, spending their last shilling in the foolish practice. Chester, like every other city, has faults of its own, and desires no importation. It is said of Ahijah that "some good thing was found in him." The same thing may be said of our old city, which has seen some remarkable things since the day that it began to be.

It is well known that Chester is a city of considerable antiquity. Its age, however, is not known, and yet we know that it was a city of great importance more than a thousand years since. It can boast an unbroken succession of mayors for more than six hundred years. A long history might be written of wars and fightings in the olden time, and of many other remarkable events.

In the history of the city, the reign of Henry the Eighth is comparatively modern. In the year 1508 wheat was sold at tenpence per bushel, and all taverns were ordered to be shut at nine o'clock at night, or forfeit six shillings and eightpence. What will our present publicans say to this? In 1507 the "sweating sickness" prevailed, and in three days eighty-seven men died, and only four women. Ten years later, in 1517, there was a great plague in Chester; and the grass in the streets was a foot high.

In the year 1537 single women were forbidden to wear caps. In the year 1540 it was ordered that no

tavern or alehouse be kept in the city by any woman between the age of fourteen and forty. Strangers had observed what a great scandal it was that young women should keep taverns. This law was made in "order to avoid great occasions of wantonness, brawls, and frays, and other inconveniences as doth arise among youth and light disposed persons."

In the same year, it seems that the ale which was brewed and sold, was weak and innocent enough. The publicans were forbidden to charge more than threepence for two gallons. If all the publicans will return to this standard of quality and strength, so as to sell two quarts of ale for a penny, they will meet the demands of the teetotallers, and the indomitable host of temperance reformers will lay down their arms. This was the law when Henry the Eighth was king; I commend the idea. If this had been the law down to our time, we should never have heard of the great temperance cause.

In the year 1550 the city had another visit of the sweating sickness. The doctors were as ignorant as the common people. The currency question puzzled the people at that time, as it has done ever since, and the problem is not yet solved. Money fell in value, from twelpence to ninepence, and at midsummer, from fourpence to twopence. Who can explain this? Wheat, which (about forty years before) was selling at tenpence per bushel, was now selling at sixteen

shillings per bushel, and barley at twelve shillings. In the year 1556 religious persecution was rampant in the land, and Chester had its human fiends who did their worst to extinguish the religion of Jesus Christ. A Christian man named Marsh was burnt within the liberties of the city, for the profession of the gospel, and endured his martyrdom with wonderful patience. He was imprisoned at the Abbey Gateway, and was tried and condemned in the Cathedral. We read that Manasseh "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon."

It is recorded that the first Nonconformist chapel in Chester was built in the year 1700. Methodism was first introduced into Chester about the year 1750. The first preacher was Mr. John Bennett, of Chinley, in Derbyshire, whose name appears in former pages. It is said that his first sermon was at Huntington Hall, nearly three miles from Chester, then the residence of Mr. George Catton.

The first service in the city was held at Mr. Richard Jones', in Love Lane, and it was in that house that Methodism in Chester first drew its breath.

After this, a large barn in Martin's Ash, on the south side of St. Martin's church, was procured and fitted up for religious worship, and here the Methodists, in the days of their early infancy, were accustomed to meet for religious fellowship. On Saturday, June 20th, 1752, Mr. Wesley rode from Bolton in

Lancashire, to Chester, where he preached at six in the evening in the accustomed place, a little without the gates near St. John's church.

On the following day, Sunday, he preached at seven in the morning, in a much larger house near St. Martin's church, as eminent a part of the town as Drury Lane is in London.

At one, he preached again, but the house would not contain half the congregation, and he was obliged to stand at the door on one side of a kind of square, large enough to contain ten or twelve thousand people; and at four, he preached again to a much larger congregation.

On the following day, Monday, June 22nd, 1752, he walked round the walls of the city, which he says, "are something more than a mile and three quarters in circumference, but there are many vacant places within the walls, many gardens, and a good deal of pasture land, so that I believe," says he, "Newcastle-upon-Tyne, within the walls, contains at least one third more houses than Chester."

"The greatest convenience here, is what they call the Rows, which are a sort of covered galleries, by which means one may walk both clean and dry in any weather, from one part of the city to the other."

He preached again at six the same evening, in the square, to a vast multitude; and on the next morning,

he set out to Birmingham, and thence to Bristol; and having finished his business in Bristol, he was, within ten days, again in Chester, and on Saturday, July 4th, he preached in the old room.

During Mr. Wesley's journey to Bristol, the Chester mob had pulled down the preaching house. The mayor positively refused to interfere with the rioters, which gave encouragement to the rabble, who never rested for two whole days till they had demolished the entire place.

On the following day, Sunday, July 5th, he preached at seven in the morning, and again at one, and four. He stood on each occasion on the verge of the ruins of the old house which had been demolished. After a storm, there comes a calm. The mob had done its worst, and all the people were now quiet and serious. There is a public record of all the mayors of Chester, in consecutive order, for hundreds of years, in the town hall, so it will be seen who was the city magnate in 1752. I wonder if he has any lineal descendants.

On the following day, Monday, July 6th, 1752, he took horse with his wife, and rode across the forest to Hartford, thence through Davenham to Gadbrook, where they stayed an hour for a little dinner, and then proceeded through Lostock and Tabley to Manchester, where he preached the same evening. A journey like this, of about forty miles in one day,

is hard enough for a man, but is unreasonable for a woman.

In the following year, Mr. Wesley left Birmingham for Bilbrook and Poole, and thence to Chester, where he arrived March 27th, 1753; he preached at five in the morning, and again in the evening. There was now a change of scene. There was no talk of pulling down houses, "The present mayor, being a man of courage, as well as honesty, will suffer no riot of any kind, so that there is now peace through all the city."

Mr. Thomas Broster was mayor of Chester in 1752; Mr. Edmund Bolland was mayor in 1753. The name of Bolland is well known in Chester to this day.

"Some gay young men made a little disturbance, and a mob gathered about the door, but they dispersed of themselves. The mayor, on the following day, sent the city crier to proclaim that all riots would be severely punished, and he also sent word, that if there was any further disturbance, he would come down and read the riot act himself. This decisive step taken by the mayor, was sufficient, and there was no further disturbance."

Three years after this, Mr. Wesley was in Ireland, and returned by Holyhead, and posted to Chester, where he arrived on Saturday, August 14th, 1756. He preached both in the room and in the square,

and stayed over the Sabbath, and preached again on the Monday. On the following day he rode through Frodsham to Bolton.

On Wednesday, April 20th, 1757, Mr. Wesley passed through Chester, on his way from Nantwich to Liverpool, he gave them one sermon, and proceeded on his journey the next day.

On Monday, April 30th, 1759, he again visited Chester, and stayed two or three days. On the Wednesday he went over to Mold, and returned the same evening, and proceeded to Liverpool, on Thursday, May the 2nd.

In the same year he was again in Chester, and preached on June 13th in the evening, and again early the next morning, and at once went on his way for the north.

On March 24th, 1760, after preaching at Warrington, he rode to Chester in the evening. On the next day he went to Mold, and on the Wednesday, he was at Little Leigh on his way to Liverpool and Ireland.

On the 26th of August in the same year, 1760, he landed at Parkgate from Ireland, and posted to Whitchurch the same day, passing through Chester without stopping.

On Wednesday, April 1st, 1761, Mr. Wesley left Manchester, preached at Little Leigh about noon, and at Chester in the evening. The next day he

went to Tattenhall, and on the Friday was at Mold, and preached again at Chester in the evening, and left for Warrington and Liverpool the next morning.

On August 1st, 1762, he landed at Parkgate from Ireland, and on the following day rode on to Chester. He proceeded on Tuesday to Northwich, where he preached about noon in the little original Congregational chapel, which would hold about fifty people, and after a little further experience of a Northwich mob, he rode on to Manchester.

On Tuesday, July 17th, 1764, Mr. Wesley preached at Warrington, rode through Frodsham to Chester, and preached in the little square adjoining the preaching house, the same evening. The next day he went to Tattenhall, and came back to Chester, where he had another service; and on Thursday, the 19th, he rode to Little Leigh, where he gave them a sermon, and rode to Macclesfield the same evening.

From the year 1750, down to the year 1765, the early Methodists in Chester had had no certain dwelling place; their services had often been in the open air, or in some temporary building, and on one occasion, as we have seen, the mob demolished their little meeting place, not leaving one stone upon another.

The society during all these years was not large, but some respectable families had joined them, such

as Mr. and Mrs. G. Walker, Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, Mr. G. Lowe, and others; and feeling somewhat stronger, they decided to quit Martin's Ash for a better place.

Down to this date, 1765, there had been very few Methodist chapels built in the kingdom, and so far as I know, there had not been even one erected in the county of Chester. The young society, notwithstanding their many trials and persecutions, had been true to their principles and profession for fully fifteen years, and they now decided (God being their helper), to have a permanent abiding in Chester.

At the time of which I am now speaking, and indeed down to my own day, the land lying between the Bars in Foregate Street and the railway station, was chiefly gardens or waste playground. There was no such street as City Road, until many years after the railway was brought to Chester.

The present street called City Road was made in or about 1863. The bridge over the canal was built at the same time. Before this time the direct way to the railway station was along Frodsham Street. I well remember these changes, and indeed I remember the time when there was no railway and no railway station.

The site in front of the Bars in Foregate Street, and where is now City Road, was secured by the early Methodists, and on this spot they proceeded

to build the first Methodist chapel in Cheshire. It was built in the eight-square form, and for the long period of forty-five years was known as the Octagon, and during all this time it maintained its prominence as the head-quarters of Methodism in Chester, and indeed in Cheshire. Chester was now made the head of a Circuit, which was called the Cheshire Circuit, and included not only the county of Chester, but also some portions of adjoining counties.

I am not certain whether Mr. Wesley was the first preacher to occupy the Octagon pulpit or not, but we know that on Friday, August 16th, 1765, he rode over from Manchester to Chester, nearly forty miles, and on the evening of the same day, he preached to as many people as the chapel would hold.

He preached in the same place on Saturday, both morning and evening.

He preached again on Sunday, both morning and evening. Crowds went away in the evening, not being able to squeeze in. On the very next day, Monday, the 19th, he preached at Northwich, at ten, and at Manchester in the evening.

On Wednesday, April 2nd, 1766, he rode over from Manchester to Chester, and remained there till the following Monday morning, when he left for Warrington and Liverpool.

After an absence of nearly six years, Mr. Wesley was again in Chester, and on Sunday, March 29th,

1772, he preached in the Octagon, morning and evening, and on Friday, April 8th, 1774, he passed through Chester on his way from Little Leigh to Alpraham.

On April 17th, 1777, he was again in Chester, and after one sermon, he took chaise across the forest, and through Winsford to Middlewich, where he joined the regular stage coach, and went on to London.

He was in Chester for one sermon, on April 6th, 1779, and went on to Warrington. He made short visits again, in April, 1780, and again in April, 1781.

Mr. Wesley was in Chester, April 6th, and July 13th, 1785, also in April, 1787, and in April, 1788, also in July, 1789.

Mr. Wesley was now more than eighty-six years of age. On Easter Monday, April 5th, 1790, he left Manchester, took a service at Altrincham, reached Northwich at noon, and preached in the old Leftwich chapel, which then had been built only five or six years, and he then rode over to Chester, where he found the Octagon crammed full of people to see and hear once more the patriarch of Methodism. He preached again on the Tuesday evening. He speaks of his brethren in Chester, as "old affectionate friends," and he says, "I was greatly assisted to exhort all those that were risen with Christ, to set their affections on things above."

He left Chester on the following morning, never to see it again, and proceeded to Warrington and Liverpool.

The Octagon chapel, which stood about midway between the bars in Foregate, and the present Wesleyan chapel in City Road, was the only chapel in or near the city, and was the headquarters of the Methodist people for a period of about forty-five years. The names of the trustees were Thomas Bennett, George Walker, George Lowe, Richard Bruce, John Gardner, James Woolrich, Thomas Brown. John Street chapel was built in the year 1811, and opened for public worship in 1812. I myself attended service in this chapel, in the year 1831, and found a good congregation. The trustees of John Street chapel were Thomas Bowers, George Walker, Matthew Harrison, Joseph Janion, George Lowe, William Guest, Samuel Becket, Richard Evans, Benjamin Davies, John Hichens, William Lowe.

On the 4th of April, in the year 1831, while yet in my teens, I walked one morning from Holmes Chapel through Middlewich and Over, to Chester. I set out early, and arrived at ten o'clock. I was notified to give evidence in a trifling case of larceny. At that time, Eastgate was flagged on the north side, and on the other side lay heaps of ashes and rubbish, and so far as I remember, there were no shops under the Eastgate row. The present Grosvenor bridge

was then in course of construction, not half built. I walked across the centres and timbers from side to side, and I saw a mason fix a sheet of lead between the stones of the arch, and I suppose that the same thing was done throughout the entire work; if this be so, there is an enormous consumption of sheets of lead in the Grosvenor arch. So much for my first visit to Chester. When my business was over, I walked back to Holmes Chapel by the way that I came.

In the month of August, 1841, a great conference, consisting of six hundred and fifty-six ministers of all denominations, was held in Manchester, for the purpose of considering the tax which was then charged upon all foreign wheat and flour which was imported into this country. My position at that time entitled me to a seat, and I had the honour of being present as a member of that great historic conference which sat for several days. Cobden and Bright, and many other eminent men were there. At that time trade was bad, wages very low, the people starving, and bread was about double the prices of the year 1890. We passed very strong resolutions in condemnation of the tax upon the people's bread, and in support of the Anti Corn Law League, which was then fighting the final and memorable battle of "Free Trade."

As for myself personally, I was then as I have been

ever since, concerned for the success of agricultural affairs, and yet I felt bound to keep my mind open, and to listen honestly to the arguments that were laid before us. Some of the speakers contended that the tax upon bread was dishonest from the beginning, and was simply meant to enhance the value of land, and to enrich the landowners, at the expense of the working classes. The discussion was absolutely exhaustive, and so far as I am able to judge, the arguments were irresistible and unanswerable.

Reference was made to the "Inclosure Acts," especially to the Act of 1801. By this Act, all the waste lands in a parish were allotted to the landowners of the same parish, in proportion to their respective freeholds. In hundreds of cases, the cottager had been entitled to the rights of pasturage for his cow or his goose for generations. All these rights were taken from him, and not a single yard of waste commons were given to him by the Act referred to. All this was denounced as dishonest and one-sided legislation, and for the first time in my life I heard the following lines:—

"The sin is great, in man or woman,
That steals the goose from off the common,
But who shall plead that man's excuse
Who steals the common from the goose?"

These simple words, which at the time were novel

and amusing, met with a cordial response in the enthusiastic conference. When this great conference was over and the Doxology was sung, we all felt that we had sounded the death-knell of Protection, and we were not mistaken.

Many of the men of this generation, and some members of parliament, are absolutely ignorant that such a conference of Christian ministers was ever held on such a subject. Men are glad enough to get cheap bread, but they neither know nor care anything about the hand that gives it. It is, nevertheless, a great fact, which ought never to be forgotten, that this conference created a great sensation at the time. It created a spirit of inquiry, and light began to dawn upon the public mind. Public speakers went forth throughout the land. A declaration of war against "taxed bread" was proclaimed, and the battle waxed hotter and hotter. All political parties, such as Whig, Tory, and Radical, were for years entirely obliterated. The only political parties that we heard of in those days, were the "Protectionist" on the one side, and the "Free Trader" on the other; these two parties alone covered the political horizon.

Such was the vigour and determination of the Free Traders, that on one single evening in Manchester, one hundred thousand pounds was subscribed for the purpose of carrying on the war. George Wilson was one of the giants of those days. Cobden and

Bright, then in their prime, were powerful advocates. They were aided by a whole army of fighting men, who carried the war into the camp of the enemy, and ceased not day or night till victory was in sight. I ought not to omit the name of Villiers, who year after year in his place in parliament, brought forward his motion for inquiry into the Corn Laws, and year after year was defeated. So far as I know, Villiers was the first man to raise this question in parliament. It was my fixed intention to attend the funeral of the above named eminent chairman, George Wilson, on January 5th, 1871, but the day was so dreadfully wintry that I did not go.

In the year 1886, I had some correspondence with the late memorable John Bright on this subject, and I have a letter in his own hand-writing, dated "One Ash, Rochdale, June 18th, 1886." He says:—

"The conference was a great event, and gave much aid to the great cause. I think there was only one Church minister there, and I am not sure there was more than one Wesleyan. The Wesleyans have come forward since then, and the Church would do better if any similar contest was moving the public mind. That you took part in the movement from 1839 to 1846, will now be pleasant for you to dwell upon. The result of our victory has been great, and good for our people, and we do not yet see all its effects upon our country and upon the world. I thank you for your kind words, and am very sincerely yours, John Bright. Mr. G. Slater, Witton Lodge, Northwich."

In the year 1846, flags were waving for months in the streets of Manchester and other towns with the

words, "The League triumphant, June, 1846." A report of the "Conference of ministers," may be seen at the reference library in Manchester.

In my early experience at Hulme Mill, and in addition to my hard work and classical studies, I was also a very constant reader of the Bible, and formed my own opinions respecting divine truth. I became a public speaker before I was twenty-five years of age, and made long journeys to many parts of Cheshire, Lancashire, and Derbyshire, where I conducted religious services. For about two years I went to Ashton-under-Line, Stalybridge, and Glossop, every week. There was then no railway, and I estimated my walking to reach on an average about ninety miles a week. All this took place when I was a young man, and before my business had much increased.

In my long journeys in Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire, I often met with men of eminence, whose names are now historic.

I heard Dr. Bunting in Irwell Street chapel, Salford, in or about the year 1840; his text was, "For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." I shall never forget the occasion. He spoke like a man who had seen some service. The last time that I heard him was in Tunstall,

Staffordshire, this was on March 28th, 1847, his text was, "He careth for you." I well remember the leading parts of his discourse. I do not think that I ever saw him after this, except once when I met him in Market Street, Manchester.

His death took place on June 16th, 1858, and he was buried at City Road chapel. I was in London in the following month, and went to see the last resting place of the man who had been so conspicuous in his lifetime. I searched the burial ground over, but could find no inscription of the great man. It happened that there was a woman hanging out clothes, on the lines which were stretched across the gravestones of eminent men. I asked her if she knew where Doctor Bunting was buried. She paused a moment, and seemed not to know, and then she pointed to my feet. It happened that at that moment I was actually standing on the *unlettered* gravestone of the great man. I told the good woman that it was in my eyes very unseemly to make this sacred spot into the drying ground for the laundry women of London. I soon found that she did not trouble her head about dead people. It was good drying ground and that was all she cared about. I made complaint elsewhere, and when I next visited City Road the clothes posts had gone, and my anger was therefore appeased.

We have seen in former pages that Doctor Bunting

was indebted to Macclesfield for his wife. She was the daughter of the organist of the new church (now called Christ Church), in that town. She died more than twenty years before her husband. The following is inscribed on her gravestone, in City Road, London :

“ Here rests

SARAH, the dear and honoured wife of JABEZ BUNTING,
Who, after a life of faith in the Son of God,
Having brought up Children, lodged Strangers, relieved the
Afflicted, and diligently followed every good Work,
Fell asleep, September 29th, 1835, aged 53 years.”

On the same stone are inscribed the following words :—

“ JABEZ BUNTING,

Born May 13th, 1777, died June 16th, 1858.

‘ Because he had set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him ; I will set him on high, because he hath known My name.’ ”

In former times the entire graveyard of City Road was open to the public, but in later years the *sanctum sanctorum*, or sacred corner, is railed off. This sacred corner is the resting place of Wesley, Dr. Clarke, and some others famous in Methodism, and must not be polluted by unhallowed feet. I have spent an hour or two in and about City Road chapel on several occasions since the year 1887, and I find busts or inscriptions, or both, of many ministers that I have known. It was in the year 1874 that I travelled for about a week with Doctors Punshon and Gervase Smith, in Italy. We were together

in Florence, Rome, and other places. I now find memorials of these distinguished men in City Road. My old friend, Rev. John Rattenbury, has an honoured place among his brethren. He was one of the most graceful and gifted, and at the same time one of the most telling and forcible, men that I ever heard, and truly it may be said of him that no man "could resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke." The last time that I heard him was on the subject of the "Day when I make up my jewels." He died in December, 1879, aged 73 years.

Dr. Bunting was, no doubt, a very able man, and a fairly good preacher. He was also a superior man in many ways, and yet he was an autocrat; he loved power, and was determined to use it at all hazards. And even when he was not in the chair, he was regarded as the power behind the chair, greater than the chair itself. He hated democracy, and professed a great dread of the lay element. He was very confident that any concession to the people would be the ruin of Methodism, and it was one of the great struggles of his life, to bolt and bar the door against the admission to the councils of the conference of even the smallest degree of the democratic element.

It was in the year 1849 that the great disastrous division took place in the Methodist Connexion. The former division of 1835 was trifling compared to

this. The Connexion was terribly rent, and it is said that Dr. Bunting and his staunch friends who acted with him looked quietly on, and saw the members of the churches scattered by tens of thousands, yet they heeded not—they held their ground. They made no concession to the people in any way, and professed to treat the whole affair as of little consequence. There was a very large majority of the rank and file of the Wesleyan ministers who looked on with dismay, but they were not bold enough, nor united enough, to challenge the occupants of the platform, until it was too late to avert the disaster.

When the roll was called, a year or two after, it was found that the slain on the field of battle were more than one hundred thousand, or in other words, there were scattered to the world and the winds more than a hundred thousand members.

In the *Methodist Times* of November 14th, 1889, we read of "The disastrous schisms which have robbed us of at least one hundred and fifty thousand society members, and many times that number of adherents. It took us twenty-six years to recover the number of members that we had lost. We can never recover the great position wantonly sacrificed then; that suicidal strife is still the main cause of the awful leakage from our membership."

The men who were responsible for all this slaughter

of the innocents and damage to the churches, have mostly gone to their final account. We must give them credit for good and honest intentions. They were wise in their generation, and they remind us of the old saying, that "some of the most foolish things that were ever done, have been done by wise men." If the great connexional ship had always been steered with wisdom and skill, it is reasonable to suppose that the Methodist societies to-day might have reached a million members in Great Britain alone. Let the past suffice, there is yet a great future for Methodism, and if our "forward movement" be vigorously sustained, Methodism will yet become a great blessing, and the salvation of this nation.

Dr. Bunting devoted his powers and did his best as occasion arose to stem the rising tide of democracy. He endeavoured to create a belief throughout the Connexion that Methodism and Democracy were incompatible. He seemed to think that if Methodism were to become tainted with Democracy it would have a most pestiferous effect, and would destroy the vitality of the Connexion, and he therefore made it his business to establish, to consolidate, and to perpetuate an ecclesiastical autocracy, and to render it everlastingly impervious to the lay element. And there is good reason to believe that he admired the work of his hands.

Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built by the might of my power?" And Prince Menchikoff, after admiring the durability of his work, is reported to have said, "After me, the deluge."

I do not attribute these words to Dr. Bunting, but there is no doubt that thoughts like these inspired his breast. He seemed to forget that nothing lasts for ever in this world. In the land of Egypt there arose another king that knew not Joseph. In less than seven years after Dr. Bunting was laid in his grave, there was a reinforcement of fresh men in the ministerial camp who began to ask, "Who was Dr. Bunting that we should obey him and hearken to his voice?" and they began to undermine and to demolish the self-lauded system of ecclesiastical supremacy, and to open the door to the people's representatives, and to give them a share in the government of the Connexion. Methodism in this respect, and in other respects, has undergone a great change for the better, and other salutary changes will take place as time goes on.

If these changes had been made, and if there had been a particle of concession to the people's wishes in 1835, no division would ever have taken place at that time. And I may remark, with greater emphasis, that had it not been for the formidable exhibition of ecclesiastical supremacy—or, in other

words, if the changes to which I refer had been made before the year 1849, no division of any magnitude would have taken place at that time. The Connexion would have remained united and intact, and there is good reason to believe that the membership in this island to-day would have reached a million, making a total of some five millions who would thus have been sitting under a Methodist ministry in this country alone. The future well-being of this nation is largely in the hands of the various Methodist churches. May they have "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

I did not marry till I was over thirty years of age. My wife was one of three daughters of Mr. John Ravenscroft, of the Cape House, Lostock. She was true and pure minded all the way through, and we lived together happily for eight years, when, early one morning, she said, "Oh! my head!" and died the next day. This sad event was the cause of bitter grief and many tears. Her two widowed sisters still survive.

For more than half a century I have maintained an unbroken membership with the Methodist Free Churches, and there was a time when I was not free from the spirit of Sectarianism, but I have been cured of this by my membership of the Evangelical Alliance, which has had a salutary influence over me.

It is now more than thirty years since I became a

member of this organisation, and from that day to this, I have never failed to remit my little annual subscription. It will be seen elsewhere that I have been present at conferences in many foreign countries, and in addition to these I have attended about twenty conferences in the principal cities and towns of Great Britain and Ireland, where I have met hosts of the best and ablest men belonging to all the Christian churches of every name from all lands, home and abroad. I have met with many giants from the United States and Canada, where all the churches are free before the law, and where there is no privileged sect.

“Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” It is very refreshing and invigorating to breathe the salutary atmosphere where the bishops and clergy of our own Church meet on one common platform with Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians, Methodists, Waldenses, Lutherans, and many other Christian men from many other Christian churches. There are men in our English and Scotch churches who have advanced ahead of their brethren, and who have risen so high in Christian light and love that they can afford to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus, side by side with others equally good and great, but who happen to bear another name and to belong to another community.

While staying in Copenhagen, in 1884, I met with the Rev. de Kewer Williams, minister of The Paragon, Hackney. He related to me that he had seen, publicly posted at the Mansion House, a placard announcing services at a Methodist chapel. The morning service to be taken by the usual minister, and the evening service by the Lord Mayor Fowler. When it is considered that the then Lord Mayor was, and is, a decided Churchman, it may be taken as a very hopeful sign of the times to see his name on the very same poster with a Methodist preacher, taking services at a Methodist chapel.

There are some men who have been fed on baby-food all their lives, and who are not able to digest strong meat, and who are so narrow and bigoted, and so mentally blind, that they cannot discern any real good outside the narrow circle of "me and mine;" and they think it their duty to frown on all those who belong to other churches, though equally good, and sometimes far better than themselves. I confess to being, in my early life, a pupil in this exclusive school, until I found my way into better company, where I learned something of the first principles of religious life and Christian charity. All narrow bigots, who never see any church but their own, would do well to consider that their own church or sect is too little for this big world.

The Honourable and Rev. Baptist Noel was, in

his day, a most excellent clergyman of the English Church. I sometimes heard him at his own church in London. He was also a devoted member of the Evangelical Alliance, and attended the conferences, where I have often met him in England and Ireland, and got to know him very well. The last time that I met him was in Belfast, in September, 1859. He preached on Hebrews xii., 1. I shall never forget his remarks on the "great cloud of witnesses." Some years before this he had determined to sever his connection with the Established Church, and in 1849 he published his essay on "The Union of Church and State," justifying his secession on conscientious grounds. It is not easy to answer so able and so scholarly a minister of Jesus Christ. The Nonconformists, of course, received him gladly, not because of his secession, but because of the excellent spirit that was in him.

As for myself, I have long since learned to receive, and regard without partiality and without hypocrisy, not only all the devoted members of every branch of the great Methodist family, but also all true Christian people belonging to all other churches of every name in all countries.

If it should happen that I write bitter things about the proceedings of any church or community, I hope that I shall not surpass the bounds of fidelity to truth. I hope that my motto will ever be, "Measures, not

men." Be this as it may, I must ask my readers to accept my assurance that I shall not in any case forget that "the end of the commandment is charity."

In the year 1850 my business had much increased, and, as I had no one but servants to assist me, I was a good deal occupied. It was my practice to attend the corn markets of Liverpool, Northwich, Middlewich, and Knutsford almost every week, and this was my regular practice for about fifteen years, when I made arrangements to retire from this business; and I removed to Sculshaw Lodge, where I lived for a few years, before removing nearer to Northwich.

In the year 1858—which was some years before I retired from business—I became interested in the construction of a line of railway from Altrincham to Northwich, on the way to Chester. It fell to my lot to collect supporters, to make estimates of capital, traffic, and revenue, and to prepare prospectuses. I went over the proposed line from end to end, and directed the survey. I attended meetings of our few friends once or twice weekly, in Knutsford and other towns, for more than a year, before we could see our way to success.

We had succeeded in getting Sir Harry Mainwaring to lend us his name as chairman, but he never attended these preliminary meetings, and, on one occasion, when in the midst of our difficulties, he wrote to us to the effect that he had decided (for

private reasons which he gave us), that he would have no more to do with the "Cheshire Midland Railway." We were struggling for life at the time, and Sir Harry's letter seemed like the fatal blow. After long and careful consideration, we decided to let no living man know of our predicament, and we sent a deputation to Sir Harry, entreating him to allow us the use of his name, and pledging ourselves that he should be protected against all personal responsibility. Sir Harry assented to this, and we then breathed more freely, and yet we felt that our position was critical.

We called a public meeting, at the Crown Inn, in Northwich, in the hope that we might get a little pecuniary support, but we soon found that the shopkeepers of the town had persuaded themselves, and had persuaded one another, that the projected railway would be most disastrous, and would ruin the trade of the town, as everybody would most certainly do their shopping in Manchester. There was a 'bus twice a day to Altrincham, which was quite sufficient. I was certainly annoyed by these blind arguments. Our meeting was opposed. We were mocked and taunted as being a lot of children that wanted a plaything, and that we should very soon be tired of our toy and should toss it away, and want something else to play with. The result was that not a single shilling was subscribed to help us. Since then, our

dire opponents, and those who acted with them, have been seen amusing themselves with the very plaything which they had so savagely condemned.

Patience, in these days, was a very necessary commodity, and I needed all that I had. My truest friend in adversity was Mr. Henry Long, of the Woodlands, near Knutsford. He was a man of an excellent spirit. We had a Provisional Board of Directors, but it sometimes happened that we two alone constituted the directors' meeting. The time eventually came when we must pay down eight thousand pounds as the Parliamentary deposit, and a special meeting of all the directors was summoned to make provision for the payment; when, to our dismay, all the nominal directors were conspicuous by their absence, except myself and my faithful friend. The deposit must be lodged on the next day. The bank would find the money on proper guarantee. We remained in anxious consultation for hours, at the George Hotel, Knutsford, when Mr. Long said, that he would leave the decision to me. I decided in favour of the risk; and on that night we took the leap, and made ourselves personally liable for eight thousand pounds; and this took place when we were confronted by our enemies, and forsaken by our friends.

We had now complied with standing orders, and in process of time we obtained our Act to build the

"Cheshire Midland Railway," and this was the first Act of Parliament which laid the foundation, and which was the very first step taken in construction of that great system of railways now so well known as the "Cheshire Lines." I was practically the first shareholder and the first director, and my name appears in the Act of Parliament (among others) as Promoter of the "Cheshire Midland Railway," and when this was accomplished I became railway auditor. In all these things I proved the truth of the saying, "Blessed are they that expect nothing for they shall not be disappointed."

I have now a letter from the late Lord De Tabley, whose estate was intersected by the railway. He writes, "I know that you were an original director of the Cheshire Midland Railway, which I know was carried out from beginning to end in a highly creditable and honourable manner."

The line was opened from Altrincham to Knutsford, on May 12th, 1862. The remaining length, from Knutsford to Northwich, was opened on January 1st, 1863. I was the first passenger from Plumbley, and took the first ticket first-class.

When first I began to write these Chronicles of Lives and Religion in Cheshire, it was my intention to have given a few pages on the Baptist churches in the county. I find that I must abridge my intentions. It is an historical fact that the Baptists were con-

spicuous in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in those days were fighting side by side with other churches, for our civil and religious liberties. They took their share, not only of mud and filth, but also of prison and death. Hundreds of them were in prison in those ages, and among the brave sufferers for Christ's sake was the memorable John Bunyan, who served twelve years in a dungeon.

At the present day the total number of members of the Baptist churches in the United Kingdom is estimated to be about three hundred thousand, and their average annual increase, for some years, is about five or six thousand. They are said to have about three thousand seven hundred chapels, and about two thousand pastors, and nearly half-a-million of Sunday school scholars. They seem to be exceptionally strong in London and the suburbs, where it is said they have about two hundred pastors, and nearly three hundred chapels. Cheshire, in so far as the Baptist churches are concerned, does not seem to be a very fruitful field. Their total number of chapels in Cheshire is about forty, with about twenty pastors, and most of these are in the towns, and very few in the country places.

The most remarkable Baptist church in Cheshire is at a place called Hill Cliffe, some two or three miles from Warrington. Its history goes back to about 1520, or three hundred and seventy years. It

seems that this was a most secluded spot in those days, and that it was selected by the devoted people for their sanctuary. There is a chapel and large burial ground, and it seems to be almost the only Nonconformist place in Cheshire that escaped demolition, when in the days of Sheldon, Bishop of London (as recorded elsewhere in these pages), orders went forth that Nonconformity must be stamped out at all hazards, and that not one stone should be left upon another of their little temples.

The Hill Cliffe chapel and premises are supposed to be the oldest in England, and to have existed before the Reformation. The chapel was enlarged in 1801, and other alterations have been made, but it seems to have had a continuous existence as a Baptist church ever since the date above named; and some of the gravestones have a date as early as 1523. Though the little sacred building has escaped the ruthless hands of the persecutors, yet the same cannot be said of the devoted worshippers, some of whom suffered imprisonment, and it is recorded that some of them suffered death, in the bloody days of persecution, rather than deny their Lord and Master.

Hill Cliffe has the reputation of being the mother church of Liverpool, Warrington, Little Leigh, and other places. The Baptist churches have a history that does them honour, and they deserve well of the churches and of the country. The few mem-

bers, with whom I have the privilege of a familiar acquaintance, I reckon among my true and trusted friends. I am fortunate enough to know Dr. Underhill, the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. I was with him in Copenhagen, in 1884. He added very much to my knowledge of the Baptist churches in India. There was a time when the Old East India Company persecuted and oppressed them, and sought to annihilate them, but in those days of trial they found a friend and defender in the Danish Government.

In the year 1863 I was elected way-warden under the new Highway Act, and held the office for more than twenty years, and regularly attended the monthly Board meetings, which were held alternately at Middlewich and Sandbach. At this time I took a prominent part in some public questions. It happened that some speech of mine was reported in the Liverpool papers, and that a gentleman, who was a large landowner in Cheshire and other counties, in reading his paper, came upon my speech, which rather struck him; and being, at that time, in want of an agent for his estates, it instantly occurred to him that my ideas were in harmony with his own, and without more ado, and unknown to everyone, he came to Northwich, and took a cab, and drove over to see me. We were perfect strangers to each other. He said that he had seen

a speech of mine in the newspaper, and that he was come to see me, and he gave me to understand what he wanted, and left it for my consideration. This took place on May 26th, 1863.

The long and short of the matter is this: that I consented to take charge of his estates, which are mainly agricultural property, the greater part of which lies in West Cheshire, and is scattered through some dozen different parishes; and, as it extends some fifteen miles from end to end, involved much travelling. I have filled this highly important and responsible position for more than a quarter of a century; and during all these years it has been my practice to go to Chester, Hooton, and other distant places two or three times every week.

The practical and legal knowledge, the judicious care, the business aptitude, the incessant vigilance, the financial responsibility, and the numerous duties involved in the management of such a property are known only to those who have graduated in the school of experience.

It is some satisfaction to feel, after this long service, that I have always had the confidence of both landlord and tenant. The labour of a life has been crowded into these years—very many have been the trials and perplexities—very many have been the cases requiring a sound, honest, and unbiassed judgment, and I hope that I have never

departed from the principles of justice or turned aside from that which is right. I have taken care to be prepared to produce my books any day, and have always been ready to give an account of my stewardship.

The year 1887 was somewhat memorable in the history of the British Association. Some subjects that were new and fresh were brought forward by capable men, and they created some sensation at the time, and great interest was excited. It seemed at one time as if sacred history was to be absolutely ignored—that the great Creator was to be voted out of court—and that Science, so-called, should be crowned king, and should reign supreme. Some men of eminence in the Church seemed to have lost their heads. They were driven from their moorings, and were seen for the moment in danger of being carried away by the scientific current. Several bishops preached sermons which were more full of science than gospel. I wrote to some of them, as was my duty. The following is one of my letters to the Bishop of * * * * :—

“ September 9th, 1887.

“ MY LORD BISHOP,

“ For many years of my life I have been a careful reader of the sacred scriptures, and I have also paid a good deal of attention to scientific questions, especially to those questions of science which seem to bear on the sacred writings.

“ I have carefully read over nearly the whole of the proceedings of the British Association as reported during their

recent conference. I have also gone over the pulpit references of last Sabbath, and I find that your Lordship is reported to have spoken as follows :—

“ ‘The criticisms of scientists had induced Christians to examine more closely God’s word, with the result that they had discarded some old views. A study of the Bible showed a gradual evolution in religion.

“ ‘Science had led Christians to discover how very gravely the New Testament had been misrepresented by the popular Christianity, and it had revolutionised the study of the word of God.’

“ The above extracts, taken in connection with other remarks which your Lordship is reported to have made, seem to differ very materially from my own views. It is now many years since I began to study these questions, and especially have I studied the first chapter of Genesis, comparing it with recent geological research ; and I have been surprised to find how abundant and how irresistible is the evidence which is given by geology in support of the biblical account. I have examined God’s word, side by side with our best scientific works, but I find no reason to ‘discard any of my old views.’ I have studied the Bible as closely as I know how, but it does not, in my eyes, ‘show a gradual evolution in religion.’ Science has not led me, as a Christian, ‘to discover how greatly the New Testament has been misrepresented by the popular Christianity,’ nor am I able to find that it ‘has revolutionised the study of the word of God.’

“I have made free to call attention to these extracts, and have expressed my divergence in as few words as possible, and I hope that your Lordship will do me the favour to give me a few particulars in order to help me over my difficulty, as it is my wish, so far as possible, to follow in the steps of one whom I so sincerely esteem.

“I am your Lordship’s ever faithful servant,

“GEORGE SLATER.”

The bishop replies to this letter, and merely says that his sermon will be published, and that I may get

a copy if I wish. Of course I sent for a copy, but, to my surprise, the incriminated passages were struck out. My readers will not only draw their own inference, but will also judge that bishops, like other people, are ordinary mortals, and that they sometimes say things which do more harm than good. It does not become any man—much less a bishop—to glorify science at the expense of the gospel of God.

When I first began to write these Chronicles, it was my intention to have devoted a short chapter to the history of the Independents in Cheshire, but I find that my time and space are well-nigh exhausted. Their history has been written by able pens. Their history is not merely denominational, but national. The history of England embraces, of stern necessity, a history of Nonconformity. The Independents, in conjunction with the Baptists and other dissenting bodies, “endured a great fight of afflictions” some two or three centuries since, when the prisons had to be enlarged to receive them. They stuck to their principles in those days, and bravely did they suffer for Christ’s sake. The present generation little knows how much they are indebted to the sturdy Nonconformists of the sixteenth century.

Some of my readers will no doubt pity the pious old fool, the owner of Thornton hall, who advertised his farm to let, with the addendum, “no Dissenter need apply.” This is only one in a thousand, of the

petty acts of persecution, which have happened in Cheshire in my day.

Mr. Chamberlain, one of the members for Birmingham, on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of a new Sunday school, in September 1889, said that, "Dissenters were handicapped, there being one religious sect which enjoyed privileges and endowments of State. To Dissenters, England owed all its ideas of civil and religious liberty." These are potent words. Not only is the nation as a whole indebted to the Dissenters, but the Church of England owes a debt of everlasting gratitude to the Nonconformists of those days. Had it not been for the dissenting bodies and their sturdy resistance, the probability is that we should have had a Popish sovereign upon the throne, and that we should have been a nation of Papists to-day. There are some few clergymen who look upon the Independents as their mortal enemies; and they little know that they are indebted to Nonconformity for their very existence as a Church.

The Nonconformists were the backbone of England's strength in the days of which I am now writing. I refer to the united strength of all the different communities, including Puritans, Quakers, and others, and it is not too much to say that they saved us as a nation from the power and dominion of Rome.

The Congregational churches in Cheshire include a goodly number of excellent and intelligent men, some of whom I am proud to reckon among my personal friends. As a Church, they are liberal and self-supporting. They would not condescend to sacrifice their independence by any bribe of State aid in any form.

If I may express a wish, it would be that they were more aggressive, more earnest, more faithful, more spiritual, and more and more successful in advancing the cause of spiritual life in the land.

It will be seen elsewhere that the existence of Congregationalism in Northwich dates from the early part of the last century, and the cause made no very great advancement until the days of the Rev. Job Wilson. I knew him well, and have been personally acquainted with all his successors, and also with many of the people. I was personally well acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Turner, of Knutsford, and frequently took services for him, in his old days, at his own church, and also at Mobberly. His method of celebrating the Lord's supper was, in my opinion, the most Christ-like that I ever witnessed. He was a good man. I shall never forget him. He died in May, 1863, having been minister for about fifty-five years. I took his pulpit on the Sabbath after his funeral. It was a solemn day, and many tears were shed.

I have known the successive pastors of the Middlewich church for half a century, down to my friend Mr. Walker, the recent pastor. I have also known many of their people, some of whom were my dear friends. I knew the Rev. John Marshall, of Over, who was a leading man, for a generation, and I knew the chief people of his church. I have also some knowledge of his branch church at Minshull, and I add some particulars which I gathered on a personal visit a few years since.

Since I began to write these lines, the Rev. G. K. Walker has resigned the pastorate of the Congregational church in Middlewich, after more than twenty years' service; and has been presented by his church, and other friends, with a purse of gold amounting to one hundred pounds; which sum has since been considerably supplemented. I wish his successor may be found to be made of the same stuff as my dear friend Mr. Walker; if so, the Congregationalists in Middlewich will not only hold their ground, but will make advancement.

The Congregational chapel in Minshull was built in the year 1809. Previous to that time the service had been usually held in a barn at Minshull Hill, then the residence of Mr. George Jackson, father of the present Mr. George Jackson, of the same place. Mrs. Davies, mother of the late Mr. Davies of Eardswick hall, was a leading spirit in those days; and it

deserves to be especially noticed that Mr. William Hitchen, of Middlewich, a lay preacher, regularly walked to Minshull, a distance of about four miles, and conducted a religious service almost every Sunday, for more than twenty years, without any fee or reward. My dear friend Mr. Joseph Wright of this place, died in 1854, and his brother James, another dear friend of mine, and a good and true man, died in 1877. Mr. Hitchen above-named, died in 1832. Mr. Chambers, of Middlewich, took the services at Minshull for some years, and it is said that the Rev. John Marshall, of Over, preached at Minshull every Sunday afternoon for forty years, and was succeeded by Rev. J. T. Maxwell.

In the year 1885 the chapel, which had done duty for more than seventy years, was re-floored, re-seated, and renovated, and a new Sunday school erected at the side. The re-opening was celebrated by special services, in the month of July of the above year. The services were held on Mr. Jackson's premises, and the preacher was the Rev. Jackson Wray, of London, who gave us a most telling discourse in the afternoon, from the ninety-first Psalm. I was pleased to meet many old friends, some of whom I had not seen for years, and was well pleased to find that a country place like Minshull was not left without some living witnesses.

One of the best and most valuable men belonging

to the Congregational churches in Cheshire, was my dear old friend Mr. Richard Dutton, of Stanthorne. His name was a tower of strength for a long generation. I wrote an obituary of him, which appeared in the public papers a few days after his death.

I must not let this occasion pass without saying a few gracious words respecting my friends the Primitive Methodists. They are certainly a peculiar people, and they have the honour, like their Master, of being despised and rejected of men. No church in the land has gone lower down in search of converts, and probably no people have worked harder than they have. They have worked on their own lines against fearful odds, and yet their faith has never failed them. Very often I have known them oppressed with debt almost beyond the power of endurance, and yet, to their credit be it spoken, they have never, so far as I know, been found wanting in honour and integrity.

They are generally very loyal to their church, and liberal according to their means. They are not what is called the "privileged sect." They have no sources of income except their own pockets and the pockets of their friends. And in this respect the same may be said of all the churches except the one which is specially subsidised.

The Primitive Methodists have existed about eighty years, and have made great advancement in

numbers, and they have done a good and noble share in keeping alive the spirit of true religion in our land. All true and good men wish them every success in their arduous labours. They have their own history, and do not need a word from me beyond an expression of goodwill. Those who would like to see more of their eminent founder, Hugh Bourne, would do well to read a sermon by Dr. Ancliffe, on the great man, published in the Wesleyan Association Magazine, in 1853.

There is a common opinion, in a certain social circle, that the Primitive Methodist preachers are, like the disciples of Christ, "unlearned and ignorant men." This may be true respecting some of them; and it is equally true that there is to be found among them some of the most excellent men, and the most lucid and powerful speakers. They are entitled to more in this respect than the world gives them credit for.

There is a large field before them—they have a great work to do. The Christian world expects great things from them, and I hope that they will be found at the front of the battle in the day when "the slain of the Lord shall be many."

For very many years of my life, I have been in the constant practice of conducting religious services among different denominations of Christians. I have also had a long experience as a Sunday school teacher,

and I have very often been called upon to make speeches and to deliver lectures and addresses on very many and on very different subjects. Nearly all my papers on these subjects have been destroyed, as it is not my wish to burden either my friends or the public, with unprofitable reading.

The following address is one of the few I may leave behind me. I will call it a sermon, delivered to a large mixed audience, in a public room, on a Sabbath afternoon.

SERMON.

TEXT.—“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.”—EXODUS XX., II.

When I was a boy, I always supposed that God created all things in one short week, and rested himself on the Sunday; and I was grown up to be nearly a young man, before I found out my ignorance. There are countless thousands of grown-up persons, down to our own day, who are equally ignorant, and do not seem to know that when God made the world there was no sun to rule the day, nor moon to rule the night. We must remember that it is our sun which gives us the length of our day. The great Creator of the universe does not measure His day by the revolution of a little world like ours, which is only a speck in His vast creation.

We are told that there was a time in the world's

history, when there was no earth; or, in other words, there was no *visible* earth. There was a time when our whole country, and when our highest mountains were deep down beneath the sea. The Bible teaches this, and the evidence of its truth is irresistible. We need not to be schooled in geological knowledge to see this. We have the evidence of our senses. We see shells which have been left by the sea, on our mountain sides. We see rocks that have evidently been formed in a liquefied state, and have been lifted up by some vast volcanic force from their ocean bed, and have been left high and dry, crooked, bent, and broken in every fantastic form. They all tell us that their present position is not their original bed.

The first chapter of Genesis is one of the most marvellous chapters that was ever written. It is a history of events that took place thousands of years before the days of man, and which no human being ever saw, and which no mortal man could ever have known, unless it were given to him from above.

This chapter of Genesis has been assailed by infidel writers, with a determination, if possible, to show that it was not in harmony with the recent discoveries of science. Some of these writers have shown that they were just as ignorant as I myself was when in my teens. They have gone on the principle that God must have created the world and

all things therein in one short week. Such writers—who appear to be so willingly ignorant—do not deserve respectful consideration.

They seem to overlook the fact that God's day, in the ages of the world's infancy, was a very different period of time from man's short day of twenty-four hours. They might never have seen the notable words, "God called the light day," without regard to the length of time. It is also written that "a thousand years with him is as one day," and that "a thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday."

A careful reading of the chapter referred to, and a careful consideration of the historic narrative, will clearly suggest that *each one* of the days of creation was probably some thousands of years. If there be any professed scientist who persists in the belief that each one of the days was only twenty-four hours, and who builds a scientific theory on such belief, he is unworthy of notice.

There was a time when God said, "Let the waters be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear, and God called the dry land earth." This took place on what is called the third day, but how many years, or how many thousand years, the day lasted will never be known to man. When these things took place there was no sun in the sky to measure or to rule our day, and yet we have many evidences that there was a light and a heat before

God made the sun. It is almost certain, that on what is called the third day, the earth was one vast primeval forest for thousands of years, and that there was then a very different climate, and that the vegetable world was then under a forcing and tropical heat.

We do not limit the power of the great Creator. He might—if He had so willed it—have covered the world with vegetable and animal life in a single hour; but He did no such thing. He could have created forests of full-grown trees had He wished; but He did nothing of the kind. He impregnated the earth with that mysterious something which no man could ever discover, “whose seed was in itself.” We are told that God created the secret germ of all things before they grew, and God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, and herbs, and trees,” and “the earth brought forth grass, and herbs, and trees.” These words do not speak of creation, but of growth, which would require an unknown length of time.

Our vast beds of coal, which are stored under ground for the use of man, were not created and placed there by the great Maker, as some ignorantly suppose. These stores of fuel are a vegetable matter, and were once growing on the surface of the globe, long before the days of man, and there are now found in our coal measures, pines and palms, and ferns of huge size, and other tropical plants, which

do not grow in these northern regions, under the light and heat of our sun. This is one of the evidences that there was then another light, another heat, and another climate.

The Bible tells us that the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea were God's first creation of animal life, and that God had said to the fish and to the fowl, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let 'fowl multiply in the earth." How did Moses know, and who told him, that the sea and the earth were filled with fish and winged fowl for ages and ages before the existence of any cattle or beast of the field? Was Moses a scientist? Had he studied geology? Was he a reader of the rocks and the stones? How did Moses know, that after the fish and the fowl, came the beasts of the earth? and how did Moses know that man was the last of living creatures that God created? It has been found that the order of creation, as given in the first chapter of Genesis, is scientifically correct and without fault. Let the sceptic tell us where we may look for the fountain of this knowledge, and how could Moses have written of these things had it not been given him from the Creator himself?

If I were to give a lesson on biology, or the science of life, some curious and unusual questions might be raised. In the first chapter of Genesis we read that God said, "Let us make man, and let *them* have

dominion." These words will bear a plural meaning, and may favour the notion that Adam was not the *only* man that God created. He is said to be the *first* man, but he is not said to be the *only* man. The sacred writings give the history of Adam's posterity, and yet it is conceivable that there may have been other creations, and other races of beings whose history is not written in the Book. God made other living creatures such as beasts, birds, and fishes, in great numbers, and some think, that there is nothing contrary to scripture in supposing that God created other human beings, in other and possibly remote parts of the world; that God was able at the beginning to make of one flesh and blood all nations of men, and he might teach the first rudiments of language to each of them. All this may have been done, and much more, and yet no record remains of any race but one. I know what can be said and written on both sides of this unprofitable question, which is beyond the scope of my purpose. I will not, therefore, pursue it further, except to refer my readers to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, where we are taught that it was by one man (only) that sin entered into the world.

If I am asked how long it is since God began the great work of creation, I simply reply that no man knoweth. I know there are writers who tell us that countless millions of years have passed since God

began the work of creation. We have read much that has been written on this subject; but no writer has ever been able to prove that the globe has existed over fifty thousand years.

We read in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus that God gave to man a jubilee; and it is reasonable to suppose that God reservèd to himself His own great jubilee, and that the day and the year will come when all heaven and all earth will be summoned to celebrate, not the finished work of Creation, but the finished work of Redemption; when "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

We read that "God rested the seventh day." These words simply mean that the great work of creation was completed; that the great forces of nature, which had kept the surface of the globe in a state of incessant motion for ages and ages, were commanded to cease further operations. We are to understand that our continents, our islands, and our mountains, had at length found a resting-place, and that the great Maker, having finished His work, stopped, rested, ceased. We must not suppose that He was fatigued and needed rest, but merely that He did not work any longer in the great operations of creation. His last work was the creation of our first parents. He then ceased, and His Sabbath then began which still continues.

We are all living in God's great Sabbath day, which is not yet ended, and which will not end till the great trumpet of God's jubilee is sounded.

The number "seven" occurs very often in the sacred writings, and is said to be a mystical number. We read that the Jews observed not only the seventh day, but the seventh year, and also seven times seven years, which is forty-nine years, and then comes the jubilee. We read of seven spirits, seven angels, seven stars, seven vials, seven plagues, seven horns, seven thunders, seven candlesticks, seven churches, seven years, seven days, besides very many other places where we find the mysterious number seven.

I will suppose the entire duration of the world, from the beginning to the end of all things, to be seven times seven thousand, or forty-nine thousand years, and then comes the final year, or rather the final thousand years of the world's jubilee.

In a little more than another century, six thousand years of God's great Sabbath will have passed, and then comes the millenium, which will last a thousand years, and will bring to an end God's seventh day, and then comes the jubilee.

The word "millenium" is composed of two Latin words, *mille* and *annus*, and means a thousand years—a word used to denote the thousand years mentioned in the Revelation, twentieth chapter, during which period Satan will be bound, and holiness become

triumphant throughout the world. During this period some believe that Christ will appear personally, and reign on earth with His saints. Behold it is written, "And unto them that look for him will he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The day cannot, in the nature of things, be very remote, when the harvest of the earth will be ripe; and when the Lord of the harvest will bid the sun to go down never to rise again, and when the harvest moon will wane to wax no more. The day is drawing nigh, when the harvest of the earth will be ready for the sickle, and when the voice of the angel will be heard in the four quarters of the earth crying with a loud voice, "Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe, and he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." We are assured that the day of the world's mortal agony is a sealed secret, and yet it is reasonably certain that the day is very rapidly approaching.

It is reasonable to suppose that each one of the six days of creation, was seven thousand years. This will make forty-two thousand years before the creation of man, and it is reasonable to suppose that God's great Sabbath will be of equal length, namely seven thousand years.

I do not pretend to have drank at the fountain of knowledge which is sealed against all other men. It

is open to every man to take the lamp of revealed light in his hand, and if his mental vision is sufficient, he will learn to read the signs of the times, and he will be able to say that the end is not yet.

It is reasonable to believe that the world will go on much in its present fashion until the year of our Lord two thousand, or thereabouts—longer or shorter; so that there is more than another century yet, before the second Advent.

If I am asked what will be the order of events, and how will the world behave itself during the coming century? I reply, that many have been the startling events of the present century, but they will be as nothing, compared with what will happen in the century that is to follow before the time of the end.

It is written that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Solomon has told us that "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." It will turn out in the coming generations that our mechanical skill, and our rampant engineering intrepidity, will not arrest the progress of events. Our national pride and our boasted supremacy will rather hasten than hinder the advancing tide. Our greatest strength will become our greatest weakness. "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength." The higher that men and nations rise in pomp and

wealth and glory, and the more fatal will be the fall. The time will come when the weapons designed for others will be seized and reversed with fatal effect.

The rapacity of men and of nations will know no bound. Men in countless thousands will make haste to be rich at all hazards. Plutus will be the god that men will adore. The lust of gold will be lawless and licentious. Men will resemble the lion's whelp on first tasting blood—nothing will satisfy the avaricious thirst for gold. The preacher may cry out that riches profit not in that day, but his warning voice is not heeded. Men will persist in building their little citadels of gold, and will forget that the rust of it will be a witness against them. They will build their puny Babylons, and will hope that themselves and their names will live for ever, and great will be the confusion when all in a moment their ship is wrecked; and when the wheels of fortune will stand still, and when the millenium glory of the latter day will burst upon the world, and when "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord shall appear the second time, and shall bind up the breach of his people, and shall heal the stroke of their wound."

The state of the churches of Christendom in the coming century cannot be foreseen. There is a

confident expectation in many minds that by the end of this century or early in the next, all the churches will be placed on a level, and that there will be an end of State aid and endowment, and that no one church or sect will be permitted the privilege and advantage of being subsidised by State favours and emoluments. Government support is not supposed to be calculated to promote either humility or piety among its recipients. The man who trusts in an arm of flesh is less likely to put his trust in the living God. The possession of power, prestige, and riches, is apt to beget vain ideas of social superiority, which lead to spiritual domination.

In the opinion of very many eminent and advanced men, we owe all our ideas of civil and religious liberty to the men who are outside a State Church. These men, for generations, have had to fight for their lives. Their right to exist has been disputed for ages ; and now, in the later ages, they have been fighting for equal rights. Their fighting has not been entirely in vain, but the final battle is not yet fought. It will be a blessed day for the Church and the world when "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim ;" and when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb ;" and when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

It is a notable fact that the new countries of the world have refused to endow any sect or denomination. There is no religious establishment in the great regions of the West. Our Colonies know nothing of any one church being subsidised and patronised by the State; and yet they not only exist but prosper, and live happily together; and some of them are an example to the mother country in all the cardinal virtues, and especially in their devotion to Christian truth, and in their loyal and cordial support of a Christian ministry.

The next century will see great changes in Christendom—great changes on the Continent—great changes in the Queen's dominions—and great changes in our laws and religions. There will be a great fight between vice and virtue—between the church and the world—and between God and the devil.

The fight between capital and labour, which has begun in this century, will reach its climax in the next, and bitter will be the battle. We shall have monopolies and combinations fighting each other, and furious will be the feuds, and the darkest and blackest moment will be just before the second coming.

The churches will need not only all their faith and zeal, but they will have great need of a large measure of Christian charity; and it is to be hoped, that before another generation is past, we shall no longer witness

the Jerusalem which is now in bondage, but rather let us hope that there may be a powerful and free Church in all lands, resembling, in some degree, the "Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and which is the mother of us all."

After the lapse of a little more than another century, six thousand years of God's Sabbath will have passed away, and those who are then alive and remain will see what eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which no human tongue is able to utter.

During the next century events more and more marvellous, and more and more momentous and alarming, will follow one another in quick succession before the time of the end, and after these things "there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking at those things which are coming on the earth; and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory, and when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh," (See Luke xxi. *passim*). There is no doubt that these prophecies relate to the dawn of the millenium, which will be looked for and expected after the end of the next century, and when the millenium is come and gone there will be an end of God's Sabbath of seven thousand

years, and this will complete the seven times seven thousand years since the beginning when "God created the heaven and the earth."

To speak more plainly, I regard each one of the days mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis as seven thousand years; and I regard God's Sabbath as another seven thousand years—these are the days in which we live—from Adam down to the end of time.

My dear friends, in concluding this my short address, I do not forget that the day of the world's dissolution is a sealed secret. No man can know when it will happen, and yet we need not shut our eyes; we need not give ourselves up to stupidity and blindness. We have not only the language of prophecy, but we have also the law of analogy, which is a book not easy to read, except to the clear-headed and pure minded. This book is "written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come;" and if it be read with the eyes of sagacity and wisdom it will tell us that we are approaching the end of the world's era, which is only another name for God's great Sabbath. Not one of us shall live to see the end, and yet the end draweth nigh.

When all these things are past and gone there will come an eighth day—not a day of twenty-four hours, as some ignorantly suppose, but a day of seven thousand years, when in the councils of Heaven

“the Ancient of Days will sit, whose garment will be white as snow. Ten thousand times ten thousand will stand before him; the judgment will be set, and the books will be opened.”

The prophetic language of scripture must not be judged too narrowly. The great Maker does not reveal to us all His purposes and secrets. He has not, however, left us in the dark, as to some of the purposes of the divine mind. We are well assured that the millenium will come, and we have good reason to believe that God's long Sabbath will come to an end. The time will come when the harvest of the earth will be ripe, and when the wheat and the tares will be in the hands of the reapers. The time will come when the horologe of the universe will have run down, and when the wheels will revolve no further, and when time shall be no longer. The world's last hours will come, when the sun himself shall grow dim with age, and nature sink in years. In the fulness of time, all these things will be accomplished, but the order of these events, and the time of their fulfilment, is a sealed secret. “Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day or the hour when the Son of Man cometh.”

Finally, I will merely observe, that I neither desire nor expect my views on these various matters to be generally accepted by the outside world. I have heard and read many opinions, and I have studied

the best books and the best evidences within my reach, and for the long period of half a century I have never ceased to take soundings. I have never ceased to exercise my prophetic vision, in endeavouring to explore the land beyond. It will be very easy to make a puff and a scoff at my sayings, but it will not be so easy to show that any of my remarks are either untrue or improbable. Modesty becomes me, and yet I am bold enough to predict, that a really careful and judicious study of the subject will lead many others, as it has led me, to the same conclusion. We should always remember that divine light is not discoverable by the blindness of human wisdom. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally." I commend this my whole subject, to your prayerful consideration.



CONCLUSION.



N drawing near the end of this little book, I will add some closing remarks, which are for the most part of a personal nature, and consist largely of extracts from my own journal. My early life may be gathered from the early chapters of this book; it was in my teens that I began to read and pray. My father was a most faithful man. He was truly "diligent in business and fervent in spirit." I had also an excellent mother. It was my father's wish that I should learn the corn trade, and I was sent for a short time to Warmingham mill.

I had not completed my teens when I went to Hulme mill, five miles from the parental home. I was simply a raw lad, and suffered from home sickness, and walked over almost every week to see my father and mother, and this practice of continually visiting my parents I regularly observed all their days, for more than twenty years.

I had an experienced old man as working corn miller, and I had every chance of learning the

business both as to the manufacture and the trade in all the branches, and I have no doubt that I made good use of my time and opportunities.

There was a small farm attached to the mill, which claimed a great deal of work and attention, so that, between the two, there were not many hours of idleness.

If hard work were fatal, I should have been dead many years since. It was my common practice, for more than twenty years of my life, to work harder than any common servant, for twelve or fourteen hours a day, and sometimes nearly all the night through; and I may add that all my life, down to this day, I have not found much room for idleness.

When I was about twenty years of age, my brother, John Allen, who lived at home, began to learn Latin and Greek, and after a time he began to study Euclid and algebra, and by and by he entered the Cambridge University, and took honours in all the branches of learning above named. He afterwards became classical tutor, but owing to a physical ailment he was unable to continue as he intended. He died a bachelor in 1872, at Heaton House, near Leek. He published a collection of poems called "Shadows of thought."

The example of my brother, John Allen, had a great effect upon me. He encouraged me to study the learned languages—lent and gave me books, and

directed my studies. It was my practice for many years, to toil all day, and to study and read Latin for some hours in the night. I became fairly well acquainted with Latin authors, especially Virgil, who was my favourite.

I never began to study French and German until I began to travel in those countries, when I was over forty years of age. Having a little knowledge of several languages I have found to be of great service to me when travelling in foreign countries.

On looking back upon my early days, after I had reached twenty-three years of age, my life seems to have been very eventful; I submitted myself to various tests and examinations, and finally I appeared before a committee of examiners in Liverpool. For about two long hours I was severely handled by the Rev. James Molineux, one of the most astute examiners of those days. The subjects were biblical knowledge, theological belief, classical education, grace, ability, talents, and especially the gift of public speaking. It is sufficient to say that I was not plucked.

The old records of Methodism abound with striking incidents of a very original sort. We have the gay and the grave, the weighty and the witty. Mr. Wesley (who reminds us of the centre of gravity) was many-sided; sometimes his words fell like a sledge hammer, and yet we often find him very remarkable for his

ready wit, such as the following. It is said that he once met a conceited fop on a narrow parapet in the street, when one of the two must of necessity step aside; the proud coxcomb said, "I never give place to a fool," Mr. Wesley instantly stepped aside and remarked, "But I always do."

Strange things are told about the Rev. Timothy Crowther, and the Rev. Jonathan Crowther, the former as a young man, travelled in the Northwich circuit in the year 1811. The latter travelled in the Northwich circuit in the years 1817 and 1818; he possessed great force of character, and his power in the pulpit was irresistible. He was also mighty in faith, and his prayers were accompanied by a holy and heavenly unction.

It is said that among Mr. Crowther's devout hearers there was a widow woman who was the owner of a cow, and the poor woman's cow was taken ill. She did not fetch the veterinary surgeon, or cow doctor, as some would have done, but she went to fetch Mr. Crowther, to come and pray for her cow's recovery. This was certainly a new departure, and was the first time that he had been called upon to pay a pastoral visit to a sick cow. He, however, was a man who knew at once what to do, and how to do it. He put on his hat, and went without gainsaying, to see the good woman's cow. Nothing would satisfy her but that Mr. Crowther must pray for her cow;

when, after the solemn preliminaries, he is said to have uttered these words :

“ Lord, if she lives, she lives,
If she dies, she dies.”

The cow took a turn for the better and soon recovered, which (as the good woman believed) was entirely in answer to Mr. Crowther's prayer. The words, which he used as given above, had something like the charm of divinity in them, and she never forgot them.

A while after this Mr. Crowther himself was very seriously ill. He had a quinsy in his throat, and he was threatened every moment with absolute suffocation, and his death was expected. The good woman, grateful for the recovery of her cow, and concerned for her beloved pastor, went to see him, and, as he had prayed so successfully for her cow, she offered her services to pray for him. He could not speak, but nodded assent, when she knelt down, and most devoutly uttered the words which had such a charm for her, and which she believed had saved her cow. She said :

“ Lord, if he lives, he lives,
If he dies, he dies.”

Mr. Crowther (ill as he was, and gasping for breath), was so diverted on hearing these words repeated by the good old woman, that he instantly burst into laughter, which burst the quinsy in his throat, and saved his life.

This is one of the hundreds of little incidents connected with the life of the Rev. Jonathan Crowther.

"All's well that ends well."

I must mention the names of some of the ministers of the Free Church, who were among my dear and personal friends. It is now over fifty years since the Rev. John Guttridge was appointed to Northwich. He was frequently my guest. We were then both very young. He was an example of simple child-like piety, and yet he was mighty in faith. His gifts as a public speaker were of a superior order. It is said that on one occasion, at the close of a public lecture, his chairman, who was a member of Parliament, remarked that Mr. Guttridge, as a public speaker, had not an equal in the House of Commons. His services were in great demand throughout the greater part of England, and the largest chapels were too small for the crowds that flocked to hear him. It is said that tempting offers were made to him to accept the pastorate of a Congregational church, with offers to double and treble his stipend. He modestly replied, "I thank you for all your kind offers, but," said he, "I dwell among my own people." He died in March, 1886, and went to his grave full of honours, and beloved of thousands.

Another of my dear and honoured friends was the Rev. Marmaduke Miller, of Manchester. He often came into Cheshire to preach sermons and deliver

lectures. He wrote largely in some periodicals, especially in the Free Church Magazine. The hand of the Master is conspicuous in all his writings. As a preacher or speaker, his language was highly cultured and courteous. If he had belonged to the privileged sect, he would have been reckoned worthy of high honours, and there is no doubt that there are many cardinals, bishops, and other dignitaries of the Church, who are far beneath him in chaste language, mental greatness, and moral worth. He was reputed to be a most able speaker on ecclesiastical law. He had no wish to perpetuate Nonconformity, only so long as we have what he considered the injustice of one privileged sect being subsidised at the public expense. He had tempting offers to take the pastorate of another church, with a salary multiplied fourfold, but he was too strong for the tempter. He went to his grave in 1889, honoured of tens of thousands. His name will live for ever, and his works follow him.

One of the first persons who belonged to the Methodist Free Church in Northwich—more than fifty years since—was a Miss Holland, a young lady of fortune. She had a gracious gift in her public prayer, and was much beloved. She afterwards became the wife of Doctor Reynolds, a medical man of the town, and died in the year 1849, at the early age of thirty-three years. She left a dear and

honoured name behind her. Her life is written in the magazine of that year. Her husband lived to take another wife, whose life was short. She was the elder sister of my own late dear wife, who died in the year 1877, aged thirty-nine years, dearly beloved for all the virtues which adorn a Christian life. Doctor Reynolds himself, though not a member of the church, was a loyal supporter of Methodism. He was a man of brilliant parts and exceptional skill in his profession, and died in the year 1862. He was the son of the Rev. John Reynolds, formerly a Wesleyan minister, who died in 1851.

The biographies of my many friends, who are still alive and remain, will have to be written by some other hand when the time comes. The history of *their* lives is not within the scope of my purpose. My intention, from the beginning, was to write of events long since past, and of men and women that I have known, and who have crossed the borderland and have left me behind. My living friends, with very few exceptions will not find their names in these pages; and it is with much regret that I find myself unable to find room for the names of very many old departed friends who deserve honourable mention. I have papers respecting Mr. Thomas Fryer, of Winnington, whom I visited in his last days; I found him as in life, so in death, "steady to his purpose." "Fixed on this ground will I remain."

I have also some sheets relating to Mr. John Moreton, of the Moss, Mr. James Deakin, Mr. John Deakin, Mr. W. H. Harvey, Mr. George Robinson, all of whom I knew well, and all of whom, after having served their generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and were laid unto their fathers.

I have a few dear friends still living, who are a credit to the Christianity of the old salt town. The Rev. Samuel Massey has borne a good name among the Canadians in the city of Montreal, for more than a generation. The Rev. William Jackson, who has gone through the campaign as an itinerant minister for nearly half a century, still lives in the city of Exeter. I paid him a visit at his own house in that city, in July 1889. My old friend Mr. John Irving has good reason to be proud of his nephew (who spent his early days in Northwich), the Rev. Anthony Holliday, who is now the principal of the Free Church Theological Institute in Manchester.

I must not omit to mention the name of Maria Senior, a woman of exemplary piety, who was known throughout the town and neighbourhood for a generation for her untiring zeal and energy as a class leader. I visited her several times when on her death-bed. Her prospects were bright as the light, and her faith unshaken. Among her personal friends, or as members of her class, were Mrs. Edward Dignum, Mrs. Percival Carter, Mrs. John

Irving, and many others, all of whom have long since greeted each other in the better land.

The Reverend Samuel Sellers, who travelled in Northwich over forty years since, was one of the oddities of his order—very eccentric, and yet very clever and witty. He was a charming singer, which added much to his popularity. He was afterwards stationed in Nantwich, where his wife died, and when her coffin came, he squeezed himself into it, and then went and preached her funeral sermon, and told the congregation what he had done. In all these things he was full of the tenderest sympathy and dearest love. He died in Rochdale many years since.

At a place called Newbridge, in the Winsford circuit, there lived a local preacher whom I knew well, nearly fifty years since; his name was George Robinson. It is said that when he was young, he planted an oak tree, and prophesied that it would make his coffin. The tree grew while he lived, and when he died the tree was cut down and served for his coffin in fulfilment of the prophecy which he had made about half a century previously.

Since writing the above, many well-known figures have disappeared from among the churches in these parts. We often hear the saying, "The Lord takes away His workmen, but he carries on His work." Almost every week supplies me with fresh material.

Some of my old friends have very lately taken leave of all survivors, and have peacefully uttered the parting words, "Farewell till we meet again."

In the year 1858, the Rev. James Caughey was engaged in his great work in Sheffield. I received news almost daily of the blessed results of his evangelical works. I decided to spend a few days with him and his people in Sheffield; and on Saturday, July 3rd, I proceeded thither, intending if possible that no person should know me. I soon found, however, that I could not hide myself. I attended Mr. Caughey's services during the Sabbath. One of his texts was, "Work out your own salvation," and another of his texts was, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." I attended his select meeting in the afternoon; I also attended a love-feast at Surrey Street chapel. The Reverend Samuel Sellers was there at that time, and I went with him, on the Monday morning, to the house of Mr. Mills, in the park, and we took breakfast with Mr. Caughey. I felt this to be an event in my life. This good and eminent evangelist gave me his book, "Christianity in Earnest," and wrote my name in it. The man did not belie his book. I found him earnest, and yet quiet and irresistible. Strong men "were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake."

In the year 1862, the Civil War was raging in

the United States. This year was neither the beginning nor the end of the war. There was a time when it seemed as if the South, which was called the Confederate States, would succeed in making of itself a nation; and public opinion and public sympathy in this country were very much divided. About this time, when the forces of the North and the forces of the South seemed to be equally matched, there was a large political meeting held in Rochdale, which I attended, and I heard Cobden and Bright, and some other eminent public men. I remember Mr. Cobden very confidently prophesied success to the North, and added, with evident assurance, that in his opinion, "the United States would for ever remain united."

Twelve months after this—the war still raging, I heard him again in the same place, when he reiterated his former prophecy with, as he said—"a thousand times greater confidence that the United States would for ever remain united." These statements on both occasions, were received by the vast audience with tremendous cheering.

Mr. Cobden died in the year 1865.

In consequence of the war and the blockade of the American ports, the supply of cotton was nearly stopped. The great cotton mills in Lancashire, owing to the want of the raw material, were compelled to stand idle, and tens of thousands of the cotton

operatives, through no fault of their own, were left without work, and very often without food. In the pitiful circumstances public sympathy was touched to the core, and the British nation did herself great honour, in coming to the rescue in a most noble and magnanimous fashion.

In this year, 1862, I was living at Hulme mill, a country place four miles from any town or village, and yet we were ready to take our share in works of charity and benevolence in aid of the distressed cotton operatives, and I proposed a monster tea meeting to be held in large tents, on the banks of the mill pond.

This meeting was hastily made public, and was held on October 1st, 1862. Such a sight was never before or since seen at that place. The roads were nearly filled with carriages, many of which had come five to ten miles. I was steward of the whole concern, and had been careful to make good provision, and yet, on the very morning, when the weather seemed promising, and the imaginary buzz in the air reminded me of "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," I saw the importance of being provided for a possible emergency, and I sent at once for a van load of additional bread and other provisions, which I hid out of sight under some sacks in the mill. The anticipated emergency came, and there was a cry "The bread faileth." I replied, "*Nil desper-*

andum. There is corn in Egypt." My hidden store met the necessity. We had enough for all and to spare, and all went off well. About twelve hundred sat down to tea. It is said that such a memorable tea meeting has never been known in Cheshire to this day.

We had many willing and generous friends to give their cordial assistance, among whom, I may mention Mrs. Antrobus, of Sculshaw, Mr. and Mrs. Ravenscroft, of the Cape, Mr. and Mrs. Dean, of Hulse, Mr. Brocklehurst, Hulme Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Carter, Millgate, Mr. and Mrs. Hesketh, Mr. and Mrs. Venables, and many others, whose names deserve mention, if space permitted.

We remitted the proceeds, and received many thanks from the relief committees in Lancashire, who all gave us the plaudit, "Well done." Many of my dear friends, who took part in this day's work, "remain among us to this day, but some are fallen asleep." "Verily there is a reward for the righteous."

I may here remark that in my travels in the Scandinavian countries, I met with Dr. Hoge, of Richmond, in Virginia, whose name appears previously as the pastor of General Stonewall Jackson. He related to me, when in Copenhagen, the following anecdote, that a king of Prussia once took a pear in his hand, and asked a little girl what kingdom it belonged to, when she replied, "To the vegetable

kingdom." He then took a stone, and asked the same question, when she replied, "To the mineral kingdom." He then asked her, what kingdom he himself belonged to. She (not liking to say the animal kingdom), replied, "To the kingdom of heaven, I hope."

In the year 1882, there occurred the rebellion in Egypt, under the leadership of Arabi. The Egyptian government seemed to be unable to suppress the rebellion, and to maintain order in the country.

It was in that year that the bombardment of Alexandria took place, when Arabi withdrew, and took up a position in the country, which, at that time, was supposed to defy an attack in front. Sir Garnet Wolseley (now Lord Wolseley), was sent out by the British government to subdue the rebellion. He sailed with his force up the Suez Canal, as far as Ismalia, with the intention of marching to attack the rebel camp.

I had been travelling in Egypt a short time before these things, and I knew the ground which was then occupied by the hostile forces. I had also gained some knowledge of the geography of the country, and felt concerned for the success of the expedition, and, believing as I did, that there was a matter of strategy, which seemed to have been entirely overlooked, I made it my business to write direct to Sir Garnet Wolseley, telling him that I knew the

country, and suggesting to him what I thought he might do.

I knew that the struggle was impending, and that the General would have his hands full, and I did not, therefore, expect any acknowledgment of my letter to him. To my surprise, however, I received a letter from Sir Garnet, dated September 11th, 1882, "giving me his best thanks for the very valuable and important suggestions which I had been good enough to make." The battle of Tel-el-Kebir was fought within a week after he had received my letter, and, as is well known, resulted in a decisive victory.

In the course of a long experience, I have often found that the unexpected comes to pass, and that one of the most likely things to happen is the unlikely. I have been a life member, and a member of the council of the Cheshire Chamber of Agriculture from the beginning, now over twenty years.

In the year 1887, and for years previously, an article called "butterine" was publicly sold everywhere, and was supposed, by the buyer, to be a second class butter, whereas it was composed chiefly of foreign fats, and, as a fact, had none or very little of the real article in it.

Sir Richard Paget brought a bill into parliament for the purpose of compelling the article to be sold under its true name of "margarine," and a committee was appointed to take evidence. There was a strong

opposition by the trade. It seemed clear to me that every article ought to be sold under its true name, and I moved, from the chair, that we send a living witness to give evidence in support of the bill. This motion was accepted by the chamber. No county in England, except Cheshire, had moved in the matter. Our witness, Mr. George Willis, who is since dead, gave decisive evidence in favour of the bill. I have been repeatedly assured by members of parliament, that had it not been for the prompt action taken by our Cheshire chamber, the "Margarine Act" would, most likely, never have passed, and the fraud would have been perpetuated to this day. When I made my motion at our meeting in Crewe, little did I think of such a direct result.

I have a short sermon on Psalm lxxxvii, 2—5. It has cost me some hours to put it together, but it has been a work of pleasure. I have something to say of the great register, the share list, and the roll call. I speak of the Lord counting when he writeth up the people. I speak of the firstborn of Israel being enrolled, and of the book of records. I speak of the records of title, also of heirship and inheritance. I speak of the book of life, and of being blotted from the book of the living. I speak of the citizens of Zion, the book of remembrance, and of them whose names are written in heaven. I speak of the shareholders, when all the ship's company meet, and of

the promised dividend in the shape of the recompense of the reward. I conclude my little sermon by a reference to Billy Chessworth, a well-known poor Christian man, who died at Holmes Chapel many years since. His last words were, "O yes; the inheritance: left it me—mine for ever, am going—take possession in his will—eternal life, gives it me." So died poor old Billy, with these words upon his tongue. There is material in the above suggestions for a sermon. It is merely the skeleton. Let my young friends clothe the skeleton, and if it be well done, it will be worth hearing.

On May 23rd, 1856, Northwich was honoured with a visit from the Rev. Robert Eckett, of London, who took the special services at Witton Street chapel on this day. In the following year, 1857, we travelled in Germany, and spent a week together in Berlin. We were present at Potsdam, when the then King of Prussia honoured us, and a great number of strangers besides, with an invitation to a princely banquet, at the Royal Palace. Mr. Eckett had the honour, in my presence, of being presented to His Majesty.

There is no man living or dead who has had such a hand in the formation of the Free Churches as the late Mr. Eckett. He was at the front from 1835 to the day of his death, and was the champion of what is called "circuit independence." He was mighty

and lucid in debate. It is said that Dr. Bunting once observed that if he were prime minister he would select Robert Eckett as his private secretary. He died in 1862, in the midst of his labours. His life is written in the magazine of that year.

One of the remarkable events of my life has just happened.

In the year 1839, when I was a young man, I was engaged to take the opening services at the new chapel at Hollingworth, in the Glossop circuit. Little did I think at that time that I should be invited to celebrate their jubilee, and yet the unexpected has actually happened. I felt it to be a remarkable circumstance, that after the lapse of fifty years I should actually find myself in the very same pulpit, preaching the very same old truth from the very same text, to some of my old friends at Hollingworth, some of whom well remember my visit fifty years since.

I cannot hear that such a thing has ever happened in the experience of anyone besides myself. On the following morning, in April, 1889, I hasted home to attend the funeral of my old and tried friend, Mr. James Gaskin, of Cuddington, who has lived as a Christian for a generation. "Blessed is the man that endureth." I visited him several times on his death-bed, when he witnessed a good confession.

Before saying my last word, I must again express

my regret that I cannot possibly find room for more than one half of the materials that have fallen into my hands. I would gladly have given a short biography of some of the ministers who have travelled in different circuits in Cheshire, who were my dear and personal friends. I am possessed of biographical sketches of many old friends, whose names (I regret to say) will not be found in these pages, but who, nevertheless, deserve honourable mention.

It is a somewhat notable fact that the Bible supplies us with very little of the dying testimony of the illustrious men of God." It is clearly the paramount object of the great Teacher to show us that it is our great duty to watch over our lives, and that our lives are largely in our own hands, and if our lives are right we need not concern ourselves as to *where*, *how*, or *when* we may die. If I live the life of the righteous I shall die his death.

" For sects and creeds let party zealots fight ;
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

There are very few men living who have had such a long and extensive experience of things in general, and of the different churches in Cheshire as myself. I have had a long experience of public business. I have been well schooled in commercial and agricultural affairs. I have been, and still am, director of several companies. I have been for some years a member of Northwich Local Board, and for two

years the chairman. I have had a seat on the Board of Guardians for fifty years, and have seen something of poverty and its cause. I have been a public speaker on religious things for more than half a century, and on the Sabbath day alone have conducted more than three thousand services, and have travelled over thirty thousand miles. It has been a common thing for me to walk twenty or thirty miles on the Sabbath for many years, and yet I never had a thought that mine was a hard lot, or that I was bearing a heavy burden of labour; on the contrary, I always felt my work to be a pleasure. I never feared a long walk, and never wished to stay at home, and never, during all my life, have I wilfully or knowingly neglected one single Sabbath service. I have always gone personally if practicable; if not, I have made the best possible arrangements, so that there might be no disappointment to the people. In this particular I have never once failed in my duty.

During all these years, I have often been called upon to take part in the public services of the different churches, and have, during all my life, from time to time, officiated as chairman for all the Methodist churches on their special occasions.

I have been chairman of the annual missionary meetings at Northwich, on about forty occasions.

In addition to these things I have repeatedly been elected as representative to the Annual Assembly,

and have had a seat in the conferences in Liverpool, Manchester, Rochdale, Leeds, Sheffield, London, and other places; and in the year 1889, was at the conference at Redruth, in Cornwall.

I was a member of the notable conference in 1851, when the question of questions, namely "The question by penalty," was discussed for days, and excited great public interest. On that occasion, John Kipling, Esq., of Darlington, a gentleman who then had a healthy mind in a healthy body, took an intelligent part, with Mr. Eckett, in the discussion of the exciting question, yet in about three months afterwards, he was gathered to his fathers. Such is life!

In the month of September, 1889, on the occasion of laying the memorial stones of a new Primitive Methodist chapel, at Willaston, in Wirral, when I was present, Colonel Cotton, M.P., was also specially present. In his speech about the building of places of religious worship, he made some remarks to the effect that a great many churches in this country had been built by bad men in order to atone for the sins of their past lives. It is to be feared that there is a good deal of truth in the remark of the gallant colonel, and it is sad to think that any men would be so infatuated as to suppose that divine favour could be purchased with money for building and endowing churches, or for other seeming benefactions.

There have been many brewers, spirit merchants, and even common publicans, who have grown rich on the ruin of thousands; or in words similar to those of Cardinal Wolsey, as given by Shakespeare, "They have found a way out of the drunkard's wreck to rise in."

Huge fortunes have been piled up and built upon the ruin of men, wives, and children, and the wreck of happy homes without number.

Some of these men in their later hours begin to take a survey of their own guilty lives, and they are made to feel the force of the words:—

"The keen vibration of bright truth is hell;"

and they try to soothe a guilty conscience, and to appease the wrath of God and man, by subscribing their blood-money to the building of some church, school, or public charity, and they die in their last vain effort to do God's work with the devil's money. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

We have seen in former pages that the ministers of our State Church, from the archbishops and bishops, down to the country curate, have all been sitting (figuratively) at the feet of Wesley, and have never ceased to take their lessons from him; or in other words, they have always wanted to know what the Methodists were doing, and which way the

Methodist breeze was blowing; and, safe as fate, they have generally tacked their sails to catch the breeze. Many particulars of these movements are given in former pages, which are perfectly clear to every honest mind. Our new bishoprics owe their existence to Methodism.

This may all seem strange enough, and yet I may ask "What shall be the end of these wonders?" One strange thing begets another. There is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous. One unexpected step is often followed by another, and yet I certainly did not expect to see our bishops and clergy adopt the tactics of Baxter and Booth. I did not expect that these self-styled "generals" would have had the honour of dragging in their rear the clerical hosts of our State Church.

I did not expect to see the clerical drum and the clerical tambourine paraded in the streets, by what is "dignified" as "The Church Army," and bringing up the rear of the Boothites and Baxterites.

Let us suppose that all the congregations in a town were to follow suit (which they may do if they choose), we might then have thirteen drums instead of three parading the streets of a town during the Sabbath day.

Let us suppose that we have all these drums, with all the hurdy-gurdy of tambourines, and camp followers, marching and counter-marching through

the streets during the Sabbath, and let us suppose that all this is done in the name of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, of whom it was said, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets."

It is said that the Pharisees made a great show of their goodness and charity, by sounding a trumpet before them in the streets, but neither Jesus Christ himself, nor any of His disciples, or apostles, ever disgraced themselves by such sickening proceedings: nor did they ever tarnish the purity of the truth by seeking to catch God's fish with the devil's net.

The apostles of our Lord never forgot that an example was left them that they should follow in the steps of their Master. Their glory was in the cross. They never lowered the standard nor dragged the cross in the mire. They never fought with carnal weapons, nor did they ever seek to gather divine fruit from the devil's tree.

We often see persons on the border land of Christian churches, who are "hangers on," neither really *in*, nor really *out*—weak in principle, ready for any novelty—destitute of the root of the matter. Eligible candidates for the Cave of Adullam—easily blown away by any gust of wind. Many of these weak-kneed brethren are easily allured to follow a drum; and it would be easy to satisfy the consciences of these persons, that football was a religious exer-

cise, that horse-racing was glorying God, and that betting and gambling were a means of grace. When men have no anchorage, and have no root in themselves and get on the down grade, they become objects of pity and commiseration to the faithful followers of Christ, many of whom are sadly grieved to find that the worst enemies of Christianity, are to be found among the sham captains and others, who think it their duty to exhibit the emblem of the cross on the devil's standard.

The great want of our time, is a spiritual leadership. We want men in all our pulpits, in all our churches, who are truly converted, and are living holy and devoted lives, and whose hearts are full of heavenly love. If our Christian ministry were composed of men of this stamp—willing to spend and be spent in seeking the salvation of sinners—if all the pulpits in our land were filled with men of mighty faith, burning zeal and a gifted tongue, we should need no human sham nor vain substitute, which are nothing but devices to hide and conceal spiritual nakedness, and mental weakness.

Men of strong faith and divine lives, never stoop to such devices; they live in a higher altitude, and breathe a more heavenly atmosphere. If we had a power of this sort in our midst everywhere, the kingdom of Satan would soon totter to its foundation, and the ritualism of the drum, and every

other ritualism, would soon vanish like a shooting star.

Notwithstanding my remarks, which may seem to be severe, I have the greatest esteem for all those who are sincerely trying to do good, and to make the world better; yet I cannot glorify proceedings which are not only unbecoming the Christian religion, but are also unprofitable and vain. If any good should happen to be done, if any sinner should happen to have been rescued from a life of sin, yet, taken on the whole, the cause of true religion has suffered a stab. The standard of Christianity has been lowered, and, so far as Cheshire is concerned, the evil is more than the good; if one has been gathered, many have been scattered. Neither the cause of Christ, nor the cause of temperance, have been advanced, but rather hindered, by the devices and contrivances of men who make incessant efforts in the vain attempt to work God's mill by the devil's machinery.

I remember reading some years since of an instructive incident which occurred in the North of England. A very stylish lady was travelling as an inside passenger in the stage-coach. She was a governess, and had been fortunate enough to obtain an appointment to take charge of the children of a noble earl in that country. The coach stopped at a roadside inn, where some of the passengers

alighted for dinner. The lady took her seat at the table, when a gentleman, who was an outside passenger, took his seat beside her. She was indignant, and declared that she would not sit at the same table with an outside passenger. The gentleman begged her pardon, and politely withdrew. The coach resumed its journey, and after many miles stopped at a lodge gate leading to a castle, where there was a splendid carriage and pair, with coachmen and liveried servants; and after being assured that all was well at the castle, the outside passenger stepped into the carriage and drove away. The lady now discovered that he was the very noble earl whose children were to be committed to her charge. She remembered how rude she had been, and how she had refused to sit at the same table with him. She was filled with agony and distress. Her way seemed to be blocked. She thought to return home; and at length she pretended to be very ill, tried to make a change in her appearance, hoping she might not be identified. But it was all in vain; she was found out and sent for to the castle. She trembled from head to foot. The noble lord took her to task, admonished her very candidly for her foolish vanity, and then freely forgave her, with the strict injunction that she would never instil these foolish and vain notions into the heads of any of his children. She had now learned a lesson for life. She remained

in the family for many years, and never forgot the case of the outside passenger.

My papers abound with incidents which are too good to be lost, and yet they are too numerous to recite. I will, however, give the following, which happened some fifty years since. Sir Robert Peel, prime minister of England, resided at Drayton Manor, near Tamworth. There was a poor man, who lived a few miles away, whom they called Old Richard, who had a daughter, who, for a petty theft, was sentenced to a very long term of imprisonment. Poor old Richard was an honest, hard-working man, and the sad event of his child being in gaol, nearly broke his heart, and he prayed to God for some means of deliverance. The good spirit put it into his mind to go and see Sir Robert Peel, and one morning, poor old Richard was seen with his old umbrella under his arm, trudging across the park to Drayton Manor. He was admitted to the mansion, and in a few minutes he was seated with the illustrious statesman, and with tears in his eyes, and grief in his heart, was relating the story of his imprisoned child.

Sir Robert listened to poor old Richard's pitiful story, spoke a few kind words, shook hands with him, and sent him home with a ray of hope. Sir Robert knew how to speak the right word in the right place. One word from him was enough. The

girl was set at liberty, and the next thing we hear was that old Richard (with a heart full of gratitude to God and Sir Robert) was kissing his dear child at the cottage door, and rejoicing over her as if she had risen from the dead.

In a few short years old Richard, having (in humble life) served his God and his generation, was gathered to his fathers. He was soon followed by his illustrious friend and benefactor, who (as I well remember) was killed by a fall from his horse.

I reckon that the prime minister of England and poor old Richard have long since greeted each other on the shores of that better land, where the rich and the poor meet together on the same level, and where a cup of cold water, if given in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward.

I have, by the kind permission of the principal, spent many entire days in the library of the Wesleyan College, Didsbury, and have searched and taken copies or abstracts of many of the records of that institution, which in these days read like ancient history.

I have read the lives of many of the eminent men from their early days till their work was finished, and many incidents of early life are recorded, such as the following, relating to Dr. Clarke, who, when he was a boy, disobeyed his mother. She, like a good and sensible woman, took him in hand, and

read to him Proverbs xxx., verse 17, to the effect that the raven shall pick out the eye of him that disobeys his mother. Shortly after this, he saw a raven outside the house, and ran screaming to his mother that the raven was come to pick his eye out. This event was one of the little causes which often produce wonderful results. The effect of this incident was not lost upon him to the day of his death.

I have spent many days in the reference library in Manchester, where I have met with numerous histories and records of the Methodist Churches, including minutes of the annual assembly of the Free Churches, and a history of the New Connexion. All these, and many more, are accessible to my readers.

Here also may be found accounts of Reverend Joseph Rayner Stephens, who, in his day, was a thorn in the side of the Wesleyan conference. After his separation from the body, he became a violent agitator, and was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment in Chester Castle, for his seditious speeches. I travelled with him, on the day of his release, from Manchester to Stalybridge, and was present at a grand reception given in his honour as a sort of political martyr. He was a finished speaker, and I often heard him gladly.

Before I lay down my pen I must tell my readers that for some years I have been engaged in collecting

materials for this work, and it is a matter of regret to me that I am not able to classify and use more than one half of the materials which have fallen into my hands. I have all the principal statistics of the different Methodist churches from the beginning. I have reports of every conference, with the names of president and secretary, and all numerical returns from the beginning, together with the lives and deaths of very many of the men, who, in their day, "were mighty men of old, men of renown."

I am in possession of papers and reports relating to the formation of every circuit in Cheshire, and I have also lists and records giving every appointment of every minister in every circuit in this county down to these days, with the consecutive numerical returns of members in every case. I find also among my papers many original circuit plans of different circuits. These old circuit plans give the names of hundreds of local preachers and other officials, nearly every one of whom have long since emigrated to those regions whence no traveller returns.

Before I say my last word I must make a few observations on the Methodist Class Meeting, which has generally been regarded as the test of membership from the beginning. It was established by Wesley. One person is called the leader, and all the rest (a dozen more or less) are called members. They meet once a week. The leader relates his own

religious experience, and then proceeds to speak to all the members one by one, and asks each of them as to their religious life, and the member in each case is expected to give some answer, and the leader gives his counsel and advice. All this seems simple and proper, and yet it has been found defective in one particular at least. It is assumed that each member has some religious experience to relate; whereas it is found that there are many good and sincere members whose experience is so variable and so undefinable that they would prefer not to be asked any questions.

There are also in the Methodist societies many persons who are reserved, or timid, or shy, and while they enjoy Christian fellowship, yet they do not like to be asked any questions; or, in other words, they do not like what I may call the "confessional." It has also been assumed that the members shall make a clean breast of all the particulars relating to their religious life during the past week. It is found in practice that we go through very many things, and have many experiences that we could not disclose or relate, even to our Christian brethren.

In consequence of these and other drawbacks which I might name, there has arisen a cry in some quarters for the abolition of the class meeting as a test of membership; and the subject is being warmly debated in many of the various circles of Methodism.

While all this contention is going on, no person, so far as I know, has ever proposed a solution of the problem by adopting a middle course. It has been my opinion for many years that it is very easy to meet all the necessities of the case. My suggestion is this: I would preserve the class meeting, with all its belongings, absolutely and entirely, as peculiar to Methodism, with the exception that I would entirely abolish the "confessional." Let the leader ask no questions from any of the members—serve them all alike in this respect—and let all the speaking be optional; let each member relate his experience if he wishes, but let no questions be asked. This simple amendment would stop many mouths, and remove many objections; the class meeting would live, and its life in the future would very likely be more healthy than in the past.

I have now come to my last words. The historical facts herein related have been collected during some of my leisure hours, extending over several years. They are put together in a very fragmentary and irregular fashion. My work has sometimes been at a standstill for weeks or months, until I have lost the thread of my narrative. This may in some degree account for the entire absence of consecutive order. I cannot delay longer, not even to revise what I have written. It must go to the press with all faults; and yet I hope that in all things I have been loyal to

truth, honesty and fidelity, and that I have done wrong to no man. My work is done. I have nearly crossed the sea of life. I am reminded of Paul, on his voyage to Rome—I take soundings, and find twenty fathoms; I proceed a little further, and sound again, when I find only fifteen fathoms; I know that I am nearing the shore of that unexplored country whither we are all bound. I now take final leave of my readers, in the hope that my little book may serve some good purposes; and that it may supply an historical want, and afford some valuable assistance to such as are in search of the true light, and who I hope may do worthily in my native county long after the writer of these pages has crossed the river.

THE END.



ADDENDA.



ON looking over the proofs of these my Chronicles, which my printer has sent me, I find that many changes have taken place since the former pages were written, and in some cases what was true *then*, is not true to-day. Some men who were described as living then, have departed this life, and others have been raised up, and have taken their places; and more vividly than ever do I see that one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.

My apologies are due to the surviving members of some old well-known Methodist families about Northwich, and other places.

In the past and present generation, we have in Northwich the names Deakin, Stubbs, Moore, Mills, Blakey, Dale, Littler, Winnington, and many others, "in whom some good thing was found," and last, not least, was Mr. Stephen Gibson, a successful leader, and superintendent of the Sunday school. One of his daughters is now the wife of Rev. James Barker,

an esteemed minister of the Methodist Free Church. I cannot go into further particulars.

Finally, Mr. Wesley in his day, said that "Methodism was raised up to reform the Church." This prophecy is being fulfilled every day before our eyes. It is generally admitted on all sides that in the past generations our English Church was in the sleep of death, was not only ignorant and depraved, but was the great hindrance to all learning and religion—dark herself and refusing to admit the light. A great change has come and is coming. Methodism has permeated and is methodising our Established Church—Nonconformity has saved and is saving our English Church from ruin and annihilation. Had it not been for the advance of Nonconformity in these lands we should have had no Protestant English Church to defend, we should have had a Papal sovereign upon the throne, and we should have been a nation of Papists to-day. I have nothing to withdraw from my former words on this subject.

The wealth, the greatness and intelligence of this nation date from the rise of Nonconformity; our material prosperity, as a nation, has advanced (whether for good or evil) *pari passu* with Nonconformity, and if by any great upheaval it should cease to exist it would be a national disaster, and would ruin both the Church and the country, and

“we should sink to what we were, an empty name.” The signs of the times are evident—the prophecy is being fulfilled—the leaven is in the meal—the operation is going on, and all wise and good men pray for God’s blessing on the process.

When the English Church is disestablished and free, Nonconformity will have fulfilled her mission and will no longer be a necessity. My prayer is “Lord hasten the day” when there shall be “nothing to hurt or destroy in God’s holy mountain,” and when the wide world over “there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” Here the pen drops from my hand—Farewell!

THE AUTHOR.

August, 1891.

INDEX.

A

- Act of Uniformity, 95.
Acton Bridge, 148.
Adderley, Elizabeth, 5, 276.
Allen, 154.
Allostock, 70, 72, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 100, 101, 104, 119, 124.
Alraham, 111, 142, 145, 149, 294, 295; Cawley, Davenport,
Sims, Tollemache, M.P., 294 to 297.
Alvanley, 222.
American Civil War (1862), 485, 487; monster meeting, Hulme
Mill, 487, 488.
Anderson, 157.
Anderton, Northwich, 139.
Anglo-Saxon, vi., vii.
Antrobus, Mrs., 488.
Appian Way, 73.
Armitstead, Cranage, 58.
Arrowsmith, Helsby, 221.
Astbury, 17, 111, 125, 299.
Atherton, Winsford, 265, 266.
Atkins, Sandbach, 282.
Autobiography, 475, 477.

B

- Bailey, Peover, 120.
Baltic, vi.
Baptist Churches, 445, 447.
Baptists, 131.
Bardsley, 151, 247.
Barker, 145, 146, 148, 149, 189, 190, 192.
Barlow, Captain, 87, 90, 115, 240.
Barnes, Northwich, 140, 141.

- Barnes, Winsford, 264.
Barnshaw, 73.
Barnton, 146.
Barrow and Jeffries, 140.
Bateman, Chorley, 292.
Baxter, Rev. M., 177.
Beard, Thomas, 133.
Beaven, Rev. S., 260.
Beecroft, 91, 92.
Bennett, 18, 32, 142.
Berlin, Potsdam, royal reception, 492.
Berrington, 277.
Beswick, Jonathan, 268.
Betteley, 42, 249.
Birchenall, 33.
Blake Lees, 212.
Bolshaw, 43, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 62, 64, 65.
Booth Bank, 106, 108, 139, 142, 145.
Bourne, Hugh, 1, 2.
Bowers, Rev. John, 31, 186, 249.
Bradley Orchard, 192, 198.
Bradshaw, 88, 152.
Bradshaw Brook, 82, 84, 85, 119, 120, 122, 124.
Bramwell, Rev. W., 238.
Brandreth, 221.
Bratt, Northwich, 157.
Bratt, Winsford, 243, 264.
Breedon, Rev. H., 264, 265.
Bright and Cobden, 486.
Britain, vi.
British Association, a Church of England Bishop, 449 to 451.
Britons, ix.

Brocklehurst, 33, 488.
Broomhall, 225.
Brunner, M.P., 77.
Budworth, 70, 91, 92, 103.
Bunbury, 293.
Bunting, 23, 31, 167, 430, 433 to 436.
Burgess, Helsby, 213, 218, 219, 220, 224, 225.
Burgess, junior, 220, 221.
Burgess, Sandbach, 282.
Burrows, 112.
Byley, 71.

C

Caldwell, 121.
Camp Meeting, 1, 4.
Canute, viii., ix., xiv.
Caractacus, 94.
Carter, 68, 69.
Carter, Percival, 483.
Carter, William, 124, 125, 488.
Cartwright, 195, 239.
Cartwright, Rev. John, 289.
Cassell's History, 95.
Cattle plague (1742), 142.
Caughey, Rev. James, 485.
Chamberlain, 452.
Charles, King, 93, 128.
Chat Moss, 90, 91.
Cheshire Midland Railway, 441 to 444.
Cheshire Prophet, 211.
Chessworth, Billy, Holmes Chapel, 492.

- Chester : races, betting, gambling, &c., 411 to 414 ; its antiquity, history, Methodism, the Octagon, persecution, the leading men, repeated visits of Wesley, John Street Chapel, Grosvenor Bridge, &c., 414 to 426.
- Chesterfield, xii., xiii.
- Cholera, Northwich, 155.
- Chrimes, Norley, 237.
- Church Army, 498 to 501.
- Church of England, changes in her doctrine and practice, strange incidents, hidden motives, severe criticism, historical facts, education, politics, subservience to Methodism, ritual, Church Army, new and remarkable statements, 372 to 410.
- City Road Chapel, London, the illustrious dead, Dr. Bunting's policy, 430 to 437.
- Clarke, Cogshall, 61, 92.
- Clarke, Frodsham, 163, 204, 207, 208, 211.
- Clarke, Dr., 238, 270, 271, 273, 504, 505.
- Clegg, 121.
- Cliffe, Peter, 50.
- Clive Green new Chapel, 268.
- Clive, Lord, 101.
- Clough, 46, 92, 102.
- Clowes, 2.
- Clulow, 18, 24.
- Coaching incident, 501, 503.
- Cobden and Bright, 486.
- Coke, Dr., 27, 152.
- Coleby, Rev., 134.
- Conclusion, 475 to 509.
- Conference of Christian ministers on the Corn Laws in 1841, John Bright, remarkable historical events, 426 to 430.
- Confession of murder, 213.

Congleton, 17, 31, 299.
Congregationalism, 451 to 456.
Congregationalists and their ministers, 128, 129, 130, 159.
Conventicle Act, 93.
Copenhagen, x.
Corbett, Nantwich, 239.
Costerdine, Robert, 19.
Cotton, Col., M.P., 496, 497.
Court-house, 4.
Cranage, 36.
Crewe first Sanctuary, 290, 291.
Cromwell, 16, 128.
Cross, 65.
Cross, Booth Bank, 108, 109, 111, 145.
Crowther, 151, 154, 186.
Crowther, Rev. Jonathan, 478, 479.
Croxtton Hall, 254.

D

Dale, Moses, 141.
Dale, William, 260.
Dane Bridge, 168, 173.
Danes, vii., viii., xiii.
Darlington, 230, 259.
Davenham, 119, 175, 197.
Davenport, 50.
Davies, Sandbach, 281.
Davy-Hulme, 139.
Dawson, Billy, 299.
Dawson, Rev. W., 185.
Deakin, 483.
Dean, Hulse, 488.

Delamere Forest, 74, 191, 193, 241, 271.

Delamere, Lord, 278.

Denmark, vii., ix.

Dignum, 89, 150, 154, 165, 166, 167, 168, 173, 244, 263, 483.

Dignum, junior, 207, 208, 209.

Dissenters, 78, 79, 80, 93, 94, 96, 105, 128.

Dodson, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 113, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 166, 212.

Done, Norley, 237.

Dorrington, 91.

Dow, Lorenzo, 31, 238, 241.

Downing, Sandbach, 280, 281.

Dunham Hill, 215.

Dunkirk, 38, 43, 44, 51.

Dutton, 81, 82, 84, 85, 119.

E

Eaton, Rev. S., 101.

Eckett, Rev. R., 280, 492, 493.

Edge, Winsford, 263.

Edwards, George, 198, 199.

Edwards, James, 159, 162, 163, 170, 200, 202, 203, 205, 206, 208, 211.

Edwards, Thomas, 200, 201.

Entwisle, Rev., 31.

Evangelical Alliance, formation, conferences, hosts of eminent men, Berlin Conference, reception by the King, great men and great deeds, 300 to 310; great Conference in Geneva in 1861, mighty men of old, men of renown, visit to France, Switzerland and Italy, remarkable events, 310 to 316; great International Conference in Amsterdam, 1867, visit to Holland, 316; great Conference at Basle, in Switzerland, rare sights, giants from all lands, visit Germany,

Wurtemberg, Austria, and other countries, 316 to 320 ;
great Conference in Copenhagen, 1884, see Denmark,
Sweden and other countries, the Danish King and Queen
among us, strange things, 320 to 325 ; Egypt, rebellion,
Sir Garnet Wolseley, military suggestion, 489, 490.

Everitt, Rev. James, 89, 105, 249, 250, 270, 271.

Excise case, 3.

F

Fairfax, General, 16.

Faram, George, 251, 257.

Faulkner, Henry, 211.

Faulkner, John and William, 204, 224.

Fisher, Gawsworth, 12, 13, 14.

Five Mile Act, 95, 97, 98, 100, 101.

Fletcher, Madeley, 141.

Fowles, 160, 168, 173.

Foxley, 171.

France, Bostock, 261.

Frandle, 107.

Frodsham, 159, 160, 162, 164, 190, 192, 193, 196, 198, 199.

Frodsham, John, 209.

Frost, Sandbach, 281.

Fryer, Kingsley, 211.

Fryer, Northwich, 482.

G

Gadbrook, 106, 107, 109, 111, 145.

Gardner, 189.

Garnett, Petty Wood, 253.

Garside, Rev., ejected minister, 100.

Gaskin, Cuddington, 493.

Gaulter, Rev. John, 283.

Gawsworth, xiii., xiv., xv., 2, 6, 7.

- Gawsworth Vicars, Crabtree and Brandt, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.
German and Germany, xi.
Gerrard, 89, 195, 238.
Gibson, Kingsley, 216.
Gilbert, Rev. Anthony, 257, 289.
Gilgrass, 82, 87, 88, 90.
Graham, Andrew, 43, 44, 45.
Green, Whitegate, 277.
Grice, 211, 212.
Griffith, Joseph, 251, 257, 258.
Griffith, Sandbach, 281.
Griffith, William, 159, 162, 170, 251, 255, 257.
Grosvenor, 72, 75, 76.
Groves, Peover, 121.
Guttridge, Rev. John, 63, 260, 480.

H

- Hacking, Rev. T., 185.
Hackney, Barrow, 228.
Hadfield, 33.
Hall, Hermitage, 60.
Hall, Richard, Sandbach, 282.
Hall, Winsford, 267.
Hampson, 189.
Hand, 153.
Hannah, Dr., 91.
Harrop, 119, 120.
Hartford, 75, 88.
Hartford Chapel and trustees, 186, 187.
Harvey, 483.
Hayes, 192, 199, 204.
Heath, Martin, Crewe, 291, 292.
Heatly, Whitegate, 278.

- Helsby, 213 to 230.
Henshall, 251.
Heraldry Office, x.
Hesketh, 46, 85, 113, 120, 121, 122, 126, 141, 488.
Hewitt, 92, 154, 166, 167.
Higginson, 121.
Hill, Rev. T., 45, 154, 155, 156, 157.
Hill, Somerford, 125.
Hitchen, Helsby, 227, 228.
Hodges, Holmes Chapel, 58.
Hoge, Dr., royal incident, 488, 489.
Holme, Rev. John, 77, 78, 79, 80.
Holmes Chapel, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 46, 48, 49, 52, 88,
100, 103, 154, 164, 177, 250, 254, 273.
Holford Mill, 81, 82, 84, 88, 89, 105, 115, 166, 212, 243.
Holford Moss, 96, 98.
Holland, Miss, Northwich, 481.
Hollands, Lord Knutsford, 101.
Holliday, Rev. Anthony, 483.
Hollingworth, jubilee sermons (1839, 1889), 493.
Holy Land, 79.
Horton, Nantwich, 283, 287, 288.
Hough, Overton, 216.
Howard, Brereton, 50.
Hughes, Stanthorne, 268.
Hulme Hall, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 122, 126.
Hulse, Jabez, 268.
Hulse, Job, 267, 278.
Hulse, Thomas, 265, 269, 271, 272, 273, 274.
Humphreys, 195, 236, 237.

I

- Independents, 130, 131.
Irving, Northwich, 208, 483, 484.

J

- Jackson, Birch Hall, 113.
Jackson, Rev. Joseph, 164.
Jackson, Rev. William, 178, 179, 483.
Jackson, S., Winsford, 265, 267.
Janion, 146, 168, 188, 189, 191, 192, 196, 198, 224.
Janion's good men and women, 193, 194, 195.
Jepson, 47, 50.
Jepson, Sandbach, 281.
Jerusalem, via Paris, Mont Cenis, Turin, Milan, Venice, Padua,
Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Sicily, sea to Alexandria,
Cairo, Pyramids, The Nile, Red Sea, Suez Canal, Jaffa,
Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Dead Sea, River Jordan,
Jericho, Bethany, Mount of Olives, Holy Land, &c., &c.
325 to 371.
Johnstone, Martha, 46.
Jones, Rev. E., 45.
Jones, Weaverham, 187.

K

- Kelsal, 74.
Kennerly, 67.
Kinder, 65.
Kingsley, 191, 193, 209, 210.
Kinsey, Gadbrook, 106, 107, 141, 145, 190.
Kinsey, Holford, 83, 84.
Kinsey, Lostock, 113.
Kipling, Darlington, 496.
Knutsford, 36, 100, 121, 147.

L

- Land Agency, 447, 449.
Lane, a magistrate, 136.
Latham, M.P., 12.

- Lea, Cranage, 59.
Leaders, Northwich (1798), 152.
Ledward, Peover, 262.
Leese, Sandbach, 282.
Leftwich new Chapel, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 152, 155 ; Sunday School, 153.
Leigh, William, 87.
Lessey, Rev. Theophilus, 33, 151, 247, 249.
Lewis, Arley, 243.
Lewis, Helsby, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227.
Lewis, Norley, 195, 237, 241.
Lilly, 151.
Little Leigh, 111, 141, 145, 146, 148, 189, 190, 192.
Littler, 91.
Local Preachers, Northwich (1798), 151.
Lomas, 33.
Lostock, 47, 61, 81, 82, 87, 93, 96, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 111, 112.
Lowe, Little Leigh, 190.
Lowe, Norley, 242, 243.
Lowndes, mail robber, 215, 216.
Lythgoe, Nantwich, 286.

M

- Maclardie, 22.
Macclesfield, 6, 8, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 32, 34, 144.
Manchester Circuit, 19.
Margarine Act, 490, 491.
Marsden, 31.
Marston, 71.
Martin, 196, 197.
Massey, Rev. S., 184, 229, 483.
Methodist Class Meeting, 506, 508.

- Methodist Free Church, 167, 171, 183, 200, 212, 225, 227, 236,
244, 292.
Middlewich, 39, 88, 197, 246, 247.
Miller, Rev. Marmaduke, 480, 481.
Millington, Gadbrook, 106, 107.
Mobberley, 48, 254.
Moores, 63.
Moreton, The Moss, 188, 483.
Morley, 31.
Morris, 140.
Mouldsworth, 192.
Mow Mountain, 1.
Murray, Grace, 32.

N

- Nantwich and Betley, 283, 292, 293.
Nantwich, cholera and history, 292, 293.
Neild, Norley, 245.
Nelson, 18, 106, 111, 133, 134, 135, 142, 293, 294, 295, 296.
Netherton, 215.
New Pale, 194.
Newton, Marston, 89.
Newton, Rev. Robert, 33, 91, 105, 266.
Nicodemus Corner, 32.
Nixon, 43, 63.
Nixon, Kingsley, 89, 211, 212, 213.
Nixon, Ralph, 201, 206.
Noel, Rev. Baptist, 439.
Nonconformist, 72, 94, 95, 98, 101, 131, 137.
Norley, 115, 190, 193.
Norley Chapel (1779) trustees, remarkable history, 232, 233,
234, 235, 236, 237.

Northwich, 38, 62, 127, 138, 139, 140, 143, 145, 150; Local
Preachers (1798), 151; Leaders, 152.

North Sea, vi.

Norway, viii.

O

Oakes, Bostock, 251.

Octagon, Chester, 146.

Oldfield, 57.

Oldfield Brow, 139.

Oldham Street Chapel, Manchester, 191.

Oultram, Joseph, 210.

Oultram, William, 211, 241.

Ouseley, Rev. Gideon, 284, 286.

Outram, Alvanley, 230, 231.

Over, 74.

Overton, 190, 206.

P

Page, 144.

Palfreyman, 33.

Park Green, 30.

Parrott, 43.

Parry, 159, 162, 170, 175, 176, 177.

Patterson, Rev. W., 63.

Pearson, George, 16, 18, 21, 24, 30, 32.

Peel, Sir Robert, and "Old Richard," 503, 504.

Peers, Helsby, 229.

Penketh, 43, 58, 59, 60, 61.

Penkethman, Nantwich, 286.

Peover, 70, 77, 80.

Percival, 252.

Persecution, 132, 133.

Personal incidents, 437, 440, 493, 496.

Peters, Rev. John, 63, 279.
Phillips, 121.
Pickering, Norley, 195, 237.
Pickmere, 81, 82, 88, 89, 90, 91, 115.
Picton, Elizabeth, 264.
Picton, Norley, 115, 193, 237.
Pierpoint, 66.
Pliny, Tuscany, 8.
Plumbly, 70, 81, 82, 87, 115, 120.
Political allusions, 5.
Poole, 106, 142.
Poole, Sandbach, 281.
Popery, 131.
Prestbury, xiii.
Preston Brook, 190.
Primitive Methodists, 1, 2, 51, 210, 456, 457, 496.
Pring, Elworth, 282.
Prophet's Chamber, 111.
Pugh, 145, 191, 194, 210.
Puritans, 127, 131.

Q

Quakers, 131, 259.
Quarterly Meeting, First, 109.
Quarterly Meeting, Northwich (1798), 150, 151.
Question by Penalty, 496.

R

Railway, Cheshire Midland, 441 to 444.
Ravenscroft, Cape Farm, 98, 122, 488.
Ravenscroft, Miss, 268.
Reed, Rev. W., 201, 274.
Remarkable prayer meeting, 260, 261.
Revival, Holmes Chapel, 154.

- Reynolds, 23, 38, 154, 481.
 Reynolds, Dr., 182.
 Richardson, 87, 184.
 Rigby, Thomas, 123.
 Rimmer, 68.
 Rinderpest, 122, 123.
 Robinson, 483, 484.
 Robinson, Peover, 121.
 Roe, Macclesfield, 20, 21.
 Romans, vi.
 Rudheath, 36, 40, 68, 100.
 Rules, Wesley's, 117.
 Russell, Tommy, 50, 51.
 Rutherford, Rev. D., 180.
 Ryder, Miss, 210.
 Ryle, Macclesfield, 20, 24, 25, 30.

S

- Sadler, 183, 197.
 Sandbach, 279, 280, 281, 282.
 Sanderson, 188.
 Sawyer, Nantwich, 289.
 Schlater, xi.
 Scragg, Randle, 252.
 Sculshaw Lodge, 74, 79, 122.
 Sellers, Rev. S., 484, 485.
 Senior, Maria, 483.
 Sermon : creation, geology, God's Sabbath, millenium, prophetic
 anticipations, biographical incidents, strange ideas, end of
 the world, &c., &c., 458 to 474.
 "Shadows of Thought," 62.
 Shakerley, 76, 125.
 Shaw, William, 65.

- Shaw, 106, 142.
Sheldon, Bishop, 94, 95, 96, 97.
Shelmerdine, 154.
Sheppard, Rev. J. B., 263.
Sheriffe, Rev. James, 248.
Sherratt, 65.
Sherwin, Sproston, 252.
Shone, 190.
Shrigley Fold, 16, 17, 18.
Shurlach and Shipbrook, 175, 176.
Simpson, Rev. David, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.
Slater, Henshall Hall, and family, 12, 13.
Slater, Holmes Chapel, 40, 67.
Slater, John Allen, 62, 63.
Slater, Joseph, 275, 276.
Smallwood, Thomas, 30, 33.
Smetham, 38.
Smith, Nantwich, 283, 284, 285, 286.
Smith, Rev. John, 292.
Snell, Barrow, 229.
Stanton, mail boy, 214, 215, 216.
Stephens, Rev. Joseph Rayner, 505.
Stephenson, a magistrate, 1, 2.
Stitt, God's Croft, 227, 228.
Stoddard, 46.
Stringer, 160, 168.
Stubbs, Lostock, 87.
Stubbs, Plumbley, 115.
Sugden, Rev. S., 50, 157 to 172, 202, 203, 239, 243, 256, 257, 277.
Summerfield, 51, 279.
Sunday School, Leftwich (1798), 153.
Sunderland Street Chapel, 20, 21, 25, 26.

Sutton, John, 89, 180, 248.
Sutton, John, junior, 177, 181, 182, 183.
Swain, 65.
Swanlow Lane new Chapel, 264.
Sweden, x.
Swindells, 9.
Sykes, 154.
Sylvester, Sandbach, 282.

T

Tabernacle, 174.
Tabley, 71, 80.
Tankard, Wincham, 184.
Tarporeley, 149.
Taylor, 65.
Taylor, Dr., 78.
Taylor, Lostock, 93.
Thompson, 159, 160, 161, 168, 170, 173, 174, 175.
Thorley, Joshua, 32.
Thornley, Helsby, 221.
Tindall, Rev. S., 51.
Toft, 71.
Tomlinson, Whitegate, 277, 278.
Townley, 151.

V

Vale Royal, 72, 74.
Venables, 51, 122, 125, 488.

W

Walker, Elisha, 56, 282.
Wallace, 157, 159, 161, 170, 175.
Walsh, 106, 142.
Warren, 154, 159, 160, 162, 202, 258, 262.

- Warrington, 103, 104.
Warrington, Bank Street Chapel, 199.
Watling Street, 73.
Weaver, River, 73, 127.
Weaverham, 108, 147, 187.
Wesley, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 32, 35, 36, 106, 107,
117, 118, 128, 131, 135, 139, 141, 143, 144, 270, 477.
Wesleyan Association, 54, 62, 67, 171, 173, 176, 181, 196, 200, 203,
207, 208, 212, 236, 256, 257, 264, 272.
Westminster, Duke of, 74, 76, 77.
Whitegate, 197, 277.
Whitegate trustees, 278, 279.
Wild, Hartford, 186, 187.
William the Conqueror, ix.
Williams, Croxton Hall, 39, 48, 50, 195, 246, 247, 248, 249, 253,
254, 255, 257.
Williams, Eliza, 208.
Williams, Francis, Northwich, 184.
Williams, Joseph, 185.
Williams, Norley, 204, 237, 241, 242.
Williamson, 83.
Willis, 245.
Wilson, Rev. Job, 129, 130, 159.
Wimboldsley, 48.
Wincham Chapel and trustees, 184, 185.
Winsford, 127, 266.
Withinshaw, Nantwich, 282, 283, 284, 286.
Witter, 68.
Witton, 73, 81, 87, 88, 138, 140, 174.
Wolfe, General, 101.
Wood, Holmes Chapel, 38, 39, 40, 45, 46, 47, 48, 113.
Wood, Rev. Robert, 266.

- Wren, Sir Christopher, 96.
Wrenbury, 225.
Wrench, Hartford, 186, 187, 188.
Wrench, John, 264.
Wrench, Lostock, 114.
Wright, Norley, 195, 211, 233.
Wright, Pickmere, 91.

Y

- Yewdall, 151.
Yoxall, 47.

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